

IRISH WRITING

THE MAGAZINE OF
CONTEMPORARY IRISH LITERATURE



Edited by

DAVID MARCUS

and

TERENCE SMITH



NUMBER THREE

IRISH WRITING

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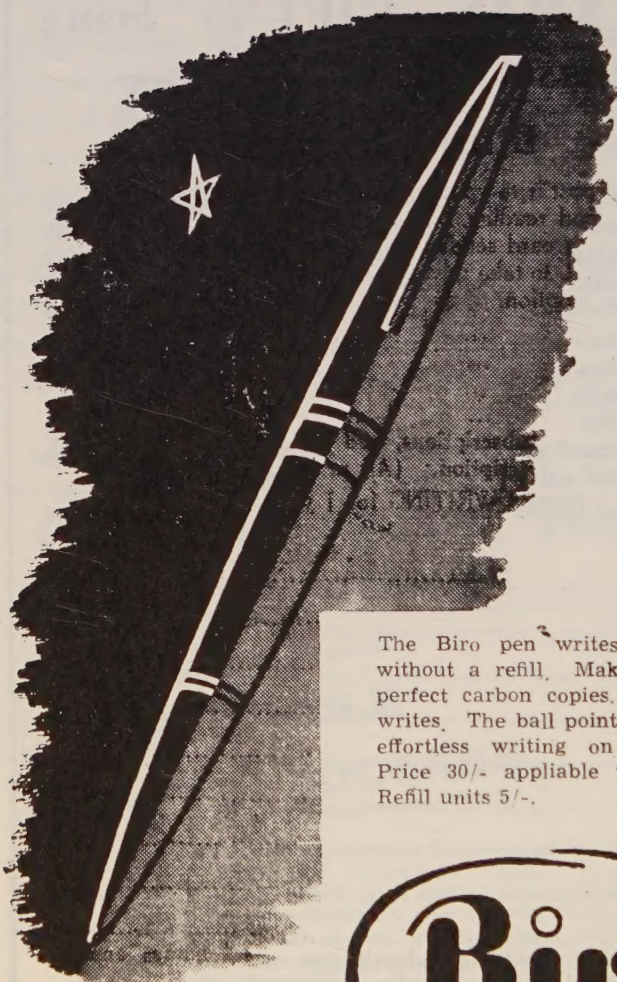
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FOREWORD



When a distinguished British literary periodical recently complained of a lack of comic writers in Britain, we were moved to the reflection that whatever else may be at fault, there is no grievous lack of the comic element in our own authors. Extravagant or subtle, witty, satiric or just "penny plain," the comic is nearly always one of the ingredients that goes to make our literature so much more outstanding than any other form of art practised in this country. Take, for example, Donagh MacDonagh's story, *Per Ardua*, published in this issue of IRISH WRITING. Here we find that very quality of high sportiveness which in the same author's *Happy As Larry* came to remind London as well as Dublin that there is not of necessity an unbridgeable gulf between lightness of heart and the poetic drama.

Sometimes, indeed, it has been urged by critics that our writers have been too irresponsibly inclined to levity in this grim period of social crisis. In a talk entitled *The Contemporary Thought of Ireland* broadcast from Radio Eireann, a critic recently stated, "The thought of having to speak on the Thought of Ireland has been weighing unpleasantly on my mind. In this country, schools of philosophy do not exactly teem; one may doubt whether the Idealist Esthetic of Benedetto Croce or

the Existentialism of Jean-Paul Sartre have aroused a flicker of interest among our intellectuals, from poets to professors." It is M. Sartre, certainly, who as guest-writer provides the starkest note to IRISH WRITING No. 3.

Readers hardly will find it necessary to be introduced to Jean-Paul Sartre, who as leader of the French Existentialist school of novelists enjoys a widespread fame. Symptomatic of the moral crisis through which Europe is passing is the desperate and sometimes destructive attitude of his characters. In *Herostratus*, the story published here, we re-encounter in a contemporary setting the madly logical, frustrated and consequently ill-willing "hero" of Dostoevsky's *Letters from Underground*, no longer impotent in his "passionate intensity," but springing to action in the light of day.

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NORAH HOULT



Cocktail Bar

EVERYBODY liked Gus Simons who was an Irish Jew looking a good deal younger than his years. Now being a Jew is just the same as being anybody else except that because your race has been pushed around from pillar to post rather more than other people, you come to believe that security is the most precious possession of all. And if you are fairly simple, as most of us are fairly simple, you think that security means first of all money, and then just to show you have money plenty of furs and jewellery and smart clothes for your women, and always take a taxi even when it is as quick to walk because that proves that half-a-crown here and there means nothing to you. But you are also very sorry for poor people and very generous towards them.

And being reared in Ireland just before the first World War is just the same as being reared anywhere else except that you have memories of walking along white roads twisting by purple mountains, and little children saying "Hello" as they slip by, and ending up in a friendly bar where stories are told and maybe a song or two sung. There is a neighbourliness there that the big cities never give you back again.

So because of the many little different twists of our lives and of our forbears' lives, each of us is a trifle different from the next man. So, of course, if another man had walked into that Mayfair cocktail bar late one winter afternoon, he wouldn't have had the identical feelings Gus Simons had. It is Gus Simons' feelings I am going to try and tell you about.

It was one of the usual London after-the-war winter evenings, which meant fog and a creeping chill and an acceptance that all gaiety and all smartness had been blitzed out of the West End. But as soon as Gus opened the door of the little bar he felt that one pocket of warmth had been salvaged. It tinkled out in the high-pitched "Darling's" and "My dear's" of the women; it asserted itself in the sight of the real silk stockings on their legs; it was heard in the talkativeness punctuated by laughter of the men standing at ease; and it most certainly glittered from the goodly array of bottles shining out from the shelves behind the bar.

And the two women who waved and beckoned to him were

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each smart in their different ways. Their faces, their eyelashes and eyebrows were done up in a more or less similar fashion, but Molly, whom he had really come to meet, had a soft, round, pink face that was generally smiling, and Vera was taller and thinner and darker with upswept hair, and she usually stared at people without smiling. However the real point to Gus was that when he sat between them round a corner of the bar they looked nice and smelt nice and were very glad to see him. He ordered a double whiskey from Laurie Burke behind the counter right away because he could see that he had a good deal of leeway to make up. They must have been sitting there a good while, for already Molly seemed under the influence. And very nice too!

While he got along with his drinking and after he'd said the usual complimentary things, he didn't talk much, but let them talk. He just let himself sink into the warm feelings the whiskey and sitting between two dolled-up, expensive women gave him. He also had a word or two with Laurie who had a pleasant, plump face, but who, he thought, looked a deal older and more careworn than when he'd seen her last. But, of course, that was a good while back.

Then Molly started in talking in a lower, more serious voice.

"I want to ask your advice, Gus, darling," she said. "It's about money. I don't think Eddie gives me enough."

"What does he give you?"

She said right into his ear so that her warm breath tickled: "Five thousand."

"Five thousand per annum?"

She nodded.

And five thousand, he thought impartially, as the door behind opened letting in a draught of cold air, was still a whale of a lot of money. There were people down his way, all over the world for that matter, who would think that if they had five hundred a year the sun had come into the sky and would always shine.

But that wasn't the point. The point was that Eddie was a blasted millionaire, and since he'd been fool enough to separate from a woman as smart and nice as Molly, he should certainly give her more.

"No, it isn't enough. Not for Eddie, it isn't enough."

Molly nodded. "That's what I think. Honest, the way things are now, it goes nowhere."

All the same, he thought, darting a side look at her, those pearls you are wearing cost Eddie a pretty tidy sum. So did the fur coat dangling over the back of her chair. You haven't done too badly out of old Ed.

"And when Peter finishes at his prep. and goes to Winchester it won't be nearly enough."

"So you've got him down for Winchester."

"Yes, I told you."

The boys down his way had to leave school at fourteen. But that wasn't the point.

"Eddie'll meet you. After all, Eddie's not so bad. Eddie'll fork out."

"He'll bloody well have to," said Molly. And she sunk her chin in her hand, and looked at the bottle, and looked towards Laurie.

And now that their glasses were filled again he had to give some attention to the other girl.

So he said: "Well, Vera, my girl, how are things?"

He said the words in an intimate tone of voice because that would show Vera that he was asking about her relations with her lover. He remembered enough from her confidences last time he met her to have retained that all was not as smooth as it should be. Anyhow it was always safe to assume that something was wrong: certainly such had been the case in all the amorous confidences he had received from women.

Vera dropped her eyelids, gazed down at her curved hand and mauve finger-nails and drawled: "Well, not terribly integrated."

"Ah," said Gus sympathetically, waiting for her eyes to lift to his while he remembered that Vera was a bit of a highbrow. Molly had said about her before his first meeting, "At least Vera can talk about things. She does read books which my sod of a husband never did. Because he couldn't understand them if he did read them, that's why."

All the same, at that moment Gus felt he didn't want to talk about Things, not at that moment with the whiskey just beginning to take effect and make him look forward to the next one. So he wasn't really sorry to avert his eyes from Vera, who was just starting to speak, when Molly on his other side said: "He pretends to love his children. So then he oughta be glad and want to do what he can for them. That's what I figure love is. Love is . . ." She paused and put her hand to her mouth to cover a slight hiccup, " . . . love is giving. It's not getting."

"That's right, Molly," said Gus. And Vera chipped in with: "You don't need to tell *us*. Tell the other guys. I know what love means. But do they? I mean it can't be ALL on one side."

Molly said across to her: "I'm not talking about what you're talking about."

She said it rather sharply, so that Gus was surprised, because it wasn't Molly's usual line talking sharply. But he wanted

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another drink, and so did the girls, and Molly insisted on paying, and after all let her, for she had more money than he had. Then they talked to Laurie a while, and Laurie told them the prices she had to give for liquor these days were no joke, since her quota was so small as the bar had started after the war. And when Laurie went off to serve, Vera started to tell him how she knew someone who knew someone who figured in a sensational murder case then being reported.

Gus listened attentively for it was quite interesting, though Molly didn't seem so interested, so presumably she had heard it all before. But when they were drinking their next round she said suddenly, leaning a little forward: "Listen, Vera! I want to tell you something. I've wanted to tell you something for a long time."

"What?" said Vera.

And Molly said: "I think you're a bit of a bitch," and then nodded to herself with satisfaction.

Gus was surprised to hear Molly say this, for what he had always thought about Molly was that she was a grand person who never said unkind things to anybody or about them. And then he looked under his eyelids at Vera wondering if she'd snap out and he'd have to pour oil on troubled waters. But Vera's face underneath her funny little upturned hat was solemnly inquiring, or perhaps stupefiedly inquiring. And she only said: "How do you mean?"

"That's what I mean," said Molly, taking up her glass.

"But," said Gus, thinking that this was beginning to be interesting, and that they could all talk it out in a friendly fashion: "What do you mean, Molly, saying that Vera is a bit of a bitch?"

Before Molly said anything, Vera, who had been cogitating, leaned forward and said: "Do you mean, my pet, that I'm a bitch because I take other women's guys away from them?"

Gus watched Molly draw on her cigarette and try to think that one out. Then she said: "No, Vera. I don't mean you're a bitch because you take other women's guys away from them." She shook her head, and then aware that they were still hanging on her words made an effort and said: "I mean women are always doing that to other women. Right through the world it's going on. They can't all be bitches."

"I wouldn't say they are all bitches. No, not *all*," agreed Gus, and Molly, putting down her glass, said in a half-peevish, half-maudlin voice: "But it's all very sad all the same."

"Don't let's get off the point," said Vera in a harder voice. "Molly says I'm a bitch. But she won't say how I'm a bitch."

"Yes, Molly, you should tell her why you think she's a bitch," said Gus earnestly.

"I don't think I said bitch," said Molly. "I think what I said was a bit of a bitch."

"Well, bit of a bitch then," said Vera.

"Yes, that's what I think," said Molly. Looking at her glass she also looked down the years. "Almost ever since I've known you, though I liked you, I thought you were a bit of a bitch."

"Don't go on saying it," said Vera on a higher note. "Tell us WHY. Just tell us WHY."

Molly stared across at her for a moment. Then she put her coat round her shoulders, and slipped off the stool. "I gotta go to the toilet."

"I'll come, too," said Vera.

"That's right," said Gus. "Both of you go." He spread a benevolent hand towards them as they turned away. They could have it out between themselves, he thought. And now that he was alone the voices of the other people in the bar came to his ears. He heard a man behind him saying: "I must get John to paint him. John would do a marvellous job with him."

He must mean Augustus John, Gus thought. He turned to glance at the group. All well-fed and very much at home, and one had a fur collar to his overcoat. The accents of the governing class but of course moving gracefully in the upper reaches of Art as well. And suddenly a hollow feeling came into his being, so that he felt lonely and apart, and intensely critical of all the well-dressed, chattering, half drunken people around him. Bitches and bastards, he thought. Because all this while other people are starving and are very, very cold. He looked for Laurie in order to push his glass over towards her, but she was talking to some woman, and while he stared at her he noticed that her full face was getting puffy around the jaw. A decent Irishwoman, he thought, and what a life for her waiting on all these bastards, pouring out gin and limes, pouring out Martinis, under the concealed electric light gadgets, pouring out her life drop by drop for, as old Omar said, whether at Naishipur or Babylon the wine of life is pouring drop by drop, the leaves of life are falling one by one.

She caught his fixed gaze and came over, and when she was measuring the whiskey he said urgently: "Laurie, I want to ask you something."

"What's that?"

"Listen to what I'm saying. Wouldn't you be better keeping a little sweet-shop back home where you came from, maybe in a village, than running this joint?"

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Laurie looked at him hard as she put the glass down. Of course he was drunk. But was he getting at her because he might know that her father kept a pork butcher's shop back home?

"No, I wouldn't," she said. "That's four-and-six."

"But, Laurie," he said, fumbling in his pocket, and drawing out a handful of coins, "wouldn't you really rather be putting sweets in a little paper bag, and giving them to the little children coming to spend their Saturday pennies with you?"

"No, I would not," said Laurie firmly, and she said it with a glint in her eyes as she looked back on the long, hard way she'd come up since she'd stood behind the counter of her father's shop.

"But, my girl, you can't really like this sort of thing . . . I mean it would be different if you were in a public house, drawing beer for decent, working people. That would be another thing."

"Yes, it would be. Quite another thing," said Laurie, and she gave Gus such a glare that Molly, who had come up in front of Vera, caught the look and cried out in surprise: "Why, Laurie, you're not cross with Gus! You couldn't be cross with Gus. He's a darling." And she put her arm protectively around his shoulders, and gave him a soft, wet kiss.

"No. Laurie, you can't be cross with me," said Gus, surprised to find that apparently Laurie was cross. And Vera, suddenly appearing, said: "Now what's the matter?" And as no one replied: "Are you staying for another drink, Molly? Or are you going on like you said?"

Molly blinked and shook her head and then said: "Yes, I've got to go. I just remembered that I said I'd be at the Dorchester at six, and it's nearly seven, and the party'll be over, and I hope I'm not too drunk, but I mus' go. Darling Gus, can you get a taxi?"

"All right," said Gus, getting heavily off his stool, "I'll see." He went out of the mews and into the cold street, and stood waiting while all sorts of cars went swiftly by, and he stared at head lights and rear lights, and at the pinched face of a cripple selling newspapers. He bought the "Evening Standard" off him, and gave him sixpence and told him to keep the change, and then went back to the bar, and said: "It's impossible. None of the bloody cars want anybody to get into them."

"Ring up," said Vera. "That's the best thing to do. Laurie has a number."

Next thing was he was in a telephone box, dialling very carefully and very slowly. It took him a little time, but at last he did get the number and a voice said a car would be around

right away. When he went back there was a drink waiting for him, and Molly said: "Gus, are you miserable? You look so sad."

He was sad, and he tried to remember why. At last he said, "It's people living the wrong way. Why doesn't Laurie . . . ?" And he shook his head.

"Why won't Laurie what?" asked Vera. When he didn't reply a gleam came into her eyes and she said: "Tell me. Were you making up to Laurie while we were powdering?"

He stared at her uncomprehendingly. And he had just fathomed what she meant, and it seemed to be also the answer to another question that had not been answered when there was a sort of commotion, and then he heard Molly say: "Hi, you two. My taxi's come. Are you coming with me, or staying on?"

"I'm coming with you," he said firmly; for Molly could give him a lift, and then he'd go home by 'bus or tube or something. That was what he wanted to do, go home and tell someone who understood that it was an immense pity about the world.

In no time Molly was getting out, and kissing him good-bye, and telling him to be sure and see Vera home. He didn't want to see Vera home, and there seemed to be no reason why he should as Regent's Park was all out of his way, but then that was the trouble with going out with posh women who expected all this sort of nonsense. And Vera had given her address to the driver.

Now the two of them were alone, so he did the expected thing and put his arm round her shoulders, but when she nestled up he remembered something he had forgotten and asked: "Did Molly tell you?"

"Tell me what?"

"Tell you why she thought you a bit of a bitch?"

"No," said Vera. "No, she never told me."

"Well, then, Vera, you ought to know. Are you a bit of a bitch?"

"Why?"

"I don't know. It's you that must know. Can't you see that you are the only person who knows the answer to that question?"

And Vera thought, or pretended to think, and then said: "Maybe I am, but it doesn't matter, does it?" And he said: "No, it doesn't matter," but after he had kissed her he thought again, and said: "But perhaps it does matter, Vera."

"Well then, I'm not," said Vera.

But was that the truth, Gus wondered, because she had said before . . . but it seemed that the subject would never be cleared up, taking its place among all the thousand and one un-

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solved problems in every life, because the cab stopped, and though Vera asked him if he would come in and have a drink, Gus said: "No, I'm sorry, I can't." "Good night, then," said Vera and disappeared, and probably she was annoyed with him, but he just wasn't in the mood even if she was and his mind quickly jumped away to the taxi-man who said, setting him down at the entrance to the tube as instructed: "That'll be fifteen shillings."

"How do you make that out?" he asked, for the man must think he was drunk.

"Well, I had to come all the way to the Club, and then I was kept waiting. I have to count that in."

"No, you were not kept waiting, and you are overcharging. But here you are then."

And, counting carefully, he gave him the exact money and no tip, and Gus heard him mutter something and bang the door as he drove away.

Another bastard, thought Gus, as he walked down the steps of the tube. Of course he probably thought that people he picked up at cocktail bars were fair game, and so most of them might be, but he wasn't, because he wasn't a fool.

And Molly was all right really, though she was drinking too much, but probably Vera was a bit of a bitch. Yet Laurie would rather be giving drinks to that kind of person than putting sweets in paper bags for little children! Many things had gone wrong in the world, and it wasn't only the war that was responsible.

The man opposite him in the tube wondered as he looked across at him once why the good-looking Jew was shaking his head. He must be drunk, he thought.

And so he was.

DONAGH MACDONAGH



Per Ardua

THE girl at the switchboard was almost too excited to make the proper connections as she switched from Garda station to Garda station with the news of the parachutist. Harry Kehoe had seen the silk umbrella first about seven in the evening and in the dim light he had run to the Guards with the news of invasion, but when they got to where he had been there was no sign of parachute or parachutist. "It'll be a spy so," said the Sergeant, but when shortly afterwards news came of a plane having crashed some miles away this theory seemed unlikely. "Whatever he is," said the Sergeant, "we'll have to find him." And an alarm was spread throughout the country to the L.S.F. and the Civic Guards everywhere.

It was a great night for everybody. Drilling and exercises and lectures were all very well, but the chance of a hunt after a man from the sky was much more attractive, and as the men in the heavy green overcoats with their large and archaic weapons spread through the country there was delighted anticipation.

"Would he have a tommy-gun do you think?" said Frank Kissane, and Harry Kehoe, who was by this time in uniform too shook his head, "If he's a spy he'll most likely have a radio-set and a wad of money and nothing much more, and if he's just an airman out of his way he'll hardly be looking for fight." Harry was a disappointingly realistic amateur soldier.

"What'll we do if he have no English?" said Frank, and Harry patted his Lee Enfield, "This is the lad that knows all the languages," he said, and after that they returned to the more normal topic of dogs and horses which were to run on distant fields in the future.

The parachutist was in the meantime seeking his pursuers. He was a slight young man of 23 called Norman Wilkins and he was under the pleasant delusion that he was in Sussex, England, not in Wexford, Ireland. This was partly due to the fact that his instruments had proved unreliable, and partly to his own notorious absent-mindedness. He had succeeded in losing himself in every town he had ever visited, and during the English evacuation of Dunkirk he had lost successively a large staff-car, a tank, an armoured car and a bicycle, though in the circum-

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stances this had gone undetected by his superiors. How he had become a pilot was one of the standard mysteries of bureaucracy.

As he limped over the damp Irish countryside, (he had slightly sprained his ankle in landing), he was wondering what had happened to his engine which had been performing in a most admirable manner just before it died. No doubt the authorities would need a report on the affair, but he could remember little of the circumstances. He was tired and had been tired for several years. The thought of long journeys in army lorries was unattractive, but he knew that he must get in touch with his headquarters as soon as reasonably possible.

As he turned a corner he saw before him two men in uniform, whom he took to be members of the Home Guard, and he was just about to ask them to direct him to the nearest phone when he found a rifle levelled at him.

"Stop where you are," said Frank Kissane, "and step forward and identify yourself."

Somewhat embarrassed by this ambiguous request and not being familiar with the language in which it was framed he stood still. "Put your hands up," said Frank, "and no cod-acting now."

"Would you be the man that came down in the parachute?" said Harry Kehoe, and Wilkins nodded, "Had a crash about an hour and a half ago," he said, "Suppose you thought it was a Jerry. Would you direct me to a phone like a good fellow."

"Arrah, what phone!" said Frank. "We'll be taking you into custody and bringing you to the Guards."

Wilkins now began to realise that there was something odd about the conversation. It was too dark for him to see the uniforms properly, but the unfamiliar phraseology and accent led him to suspect that perhaps he was not in Sussex after all. "But I say," he said, "I'm not a Jerry or anything. Raf you know. I can identify myself to the local constable."

There was a great deal more tedious misunderstanding before he realised that he was in neutral Ireland and that it was the intention and desire of the two Irishmen with guns to conduct him to the Garda Station from where he would be taken to an internment camp for the duration of the war. A Prisoner of War Camp in Germany had always been a possibility, but this was an unexpected development in his career.

As he and Frank and Harry walked back slowly towards the village they talked amicably of the war. He told them of his experiences in France, the meanness of the French peasants, the retreat to Dunkirk, during which he had hazardously driven cars, tanks and bicycles, the difficult food situation in England

and the early hours maintained in the services. They told him of a train which took twelve hours to reach Dublin, of the prospects of certain dogs and horses, and of a number of their friends who were working in England at that very moment. When they reached the Garda Station they were good friends and Harry and Frank sent out for the first bottle of whiskey. They were all singing when the military lorry and escort came for him, and all the way to the Internment Camp at the Curragh he sang softly of his imminent return to Galway Bay.

At the Curragh he was comfortable and happy. Food was good, hours were easy and soon books began to arrive from home. For the first time in his life he was able to relax.

His was a strenuous family of enthusiastic men who took cold baths early in the morning, played rough games, and refused to believe that he was serious in his preference for lolling in bed till eleven.

For three months he was indolently happy, and then his brother Kenneth arrived.

Kenneth was a big man with a big moustache and a big voice. He knew, or thought he knew, what he was fighting for, had an innate dislike for anyone he did not know and anything he did not understand. Now he expressed his intention of escaping from internment with the greatest promptitude.

Norman viewed his large enthusiasm without positive or conscious hatred, since he had been reared to regard such qualities as he did not possess as desirable, but it was only in a suppressed and unrecognised portion of his mind that he loathed the call to action and duty.

There were with the Wilkins brothers at the Curragh a number of other young men who were entitled to wear the same tie and they were dragooned by Kenneth into attempting the escape which he proposed, and soon, working on the model of the escape books of the previous war, they had perfected a plan which seemed fool-proof.

They were to wait for a dark and stormy night; those in the camp who came from other, and therefore inferior, schools were to stage a minor riot, and under cover of this and the darkness the escapees were to leave the camp unnoticed. They arranged by a series of elaborate letters, which they presumed would deceive the camp censors, for civilian clothing to be waiting for them a half mile from the camp, and small and inaccurate maps of the country were made and distributed.

Through all these preparations Norman remained quiescent but obedient, presuming it his duty to King and Country to follow Kenneth's directions, and when the properly dark and stormy night arrived he prepared to follow his orders.

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The riot started on schedule, but to the surprise of the rioters no interest was taken in their activities by the camp authorities. The escapees, on the other hand, as they made their way towards what they took to be freedom, found themselves quietly surrounded and herded back to their quarters by the military, who carefully explained that a more elaborate code would be needed in their letters if they hoped to cloak their intentions. When the roll was called only Norman Wilkins was missing.

In the darkness, confused by the wind and the rain and only half remembering his instructions, he had wandered in the direction of the ostensible riot, thereby escaping the guards, and with no difficulty whatsoever he had climbed over the barbed wire, over several walls and was soon free on the wet roads of Ireland.

He had, of course, forgotten to bring the sketch map which had been prepared for him, and as he walked along in his dripping uniform he had no idea where he was or where he was heading. It was too dark to see anything except the glimmer of the road, but every time he tried to get off the road to look for shelter he found that high demesne walls were everywhere.

At last he came to a small village, a deserted street and a bicycle abandoned outside a public house. He mounted the bicycle and rode into the darkness.

He cycled for three hours, a moving bath of water, a portable and compendious ocean, and then, blinded by rain and staring headlamps, rode straight into a large and expensive motor-car.

When he recovered consciousness he was dry and warm and, apart from multiple bruises and lacerations, comfortable. Blue eyes and golden hair arranged in a most pleasing Anglo-Saxon combination filled most of the scene when he opened his eyes and, sick though he was, he gazed at them with the admiration of the enforced celibate.

The owner of the hair, eyes and other forms of feminine allure proved to be one Gladys Whitlow-Murphy, age 19, height 5 ft. 5 ins., bust 35 in. waist 24 in. hips 35 in., daughter to one Thomas Whitlow-Murphy, son in turn to one Tom Murphy, as decent a skin as every stood behind a counter. Luck, business acumen and the prosperity engendered by the first world war had provided the hyphen, the Big House, loyalty to the neighbouring island and its Empire and an accent which was called a brogue in England and a Rathmines accent in Ireland.

The admiration with which Norman gazed on Miss Whitlow-Murphy was mirrored in the admiration with which she gazed at him. She had pestered many of her friends and neighbours with

requests for contributions towards a fund to purchase Spitfires for Britain, had procured, and worn with pride the badge of the R.A.F., had sat each night with her proud and loyal parents as they listened to the B.B.C. news, and now here, in her own home, in the great canopied double-bed which had belonged to the previous owners, was the physical embodiment of all her dreams, a pilot of the Raf. True he had not a big moustache or a red face, but he had the uniform, and as he croaked, "Where am I?" it became obvious that he had the authentic accent.

Nursed inexpertly but kindly by Miss Whitlow-Murphy, pampered by her mother, the high-bred daughter of a decayed house, surfeited with cigars and brandy by her father, Norman soon recovered from his wounds. If the camp had been comfort this was luxury, the food was excellent, the water in the bath-room was always hot, the springs in every chair were resilient and his bed was broad, deep and hospitable. Daily he read in the papers of the search which was being prosecuted through the country for the missing internee, of glimpses which were caught of him in remote portions of the land, and reading these accounts in the temperate air of mid-day he would stretch a hand from his bed and ring for a second and more substantial breakfast.

In the grounds which spread loving and ample arms about the house he and Miss Whitlow-Murphy, now Gladys to his Norman, would wander underneath the soft rain, sheltering occasionally in little 18th century summer-houses, or racing each other laughingly over the soft turf. As the days and weeks passed he told her of the final stand made by himself and the British Expeditionary Force at Dunkirk, of the Jerrys shot from the conning-tower of his armoured cars, of the destruction wrought by his tanks; and, ashamed of her own inactive existence she gave to his daring the only gift in her power, her love.

An idyllic existence for a hero with his battles fought, bucolic indolence after martial valour, and, with Gladys' arms about him in the park, the gun-room or the library, Norman was content to enjoy his reward for ever more.

But Cincinnatus was taken from the plough and Anthony was called to Actium, facts little appreciated by Norman until the evening of his host's dinner-party.

This dinner had been projected for some time and Norman had hesitantly opposed it, since he did not believe that inviting half the gentlemen of the county to meet him was the best way of preserving his secret and his freedom. His host, however, insisted that his guests would be those most trustworthy and loyal, friends every one of the cause which Norman represented,

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and parties moreover to a small scheme which he had evolved for the further advancement and happiness of Norman himself. Suspecting that it was perhaps proposed to make a collection from these excellent gentlemen Norman again and more hesitantly protested, but his host shook his wise old head and assured him that Time, after the manner of the large allegorical picture in the library, would reveal Truth. Norman, remembering that Truth in the picture was a plump female, scantily clad, went puzzled away in search of Gladys.

A strange country, Ireland, he reflected, where his host, Irish to the teeth, appeared to be so anxious to assist his country's traditional enemy, where Gladys, that roguish colleen, appeared to think of herself as a daughter of Empire and spoke in her delicious brogue of "Our Boys," meaning thereby the soldiers of Britain.

His bewilderment was enhanced at the dinner-party. The guests were nine, all typical Irish Paddys, Norman told himself, who shook him warmly by the hand, congratulated him on his great stand and his great record and then pressed immense glasses of whiskey on him. As the dinner proceeded the satisfaction engendered by their admiring friendship began to fade as he realised the purport of their talk.

Only ninety odd miles away, they said, is the Border, beyond which is the embattled Empire. A large car suitably loaded down with petrol pooled by all of them, a non-approved road across the Border, a little guile and planning and the hero would be restored to the scene of his heroism. To every difficulty raised by the hero they had an answer. They had been planning his escape for weeks and had been able to overcome greater problems than he could propound. Fading in the heavy cigar-smoke over the coffee he saw his South Sea Island, his tropic lagoon in green Kildare.

The parting with Gladys was tearful on her part, staunch on his; with his pipe gripped upside down in even white teeth which shone more brightly under his new and large moustache he stared resolutely through the window at the rain. A little time, he said, and they would be together again, since fate which unites lovers must reunite them. "And then begorrah," he said, determined to speak the dialect of his beloved, "'tis we will have the life of it. One time we'll be riding across the plains of Kildare on fine high-spirited horses, and another time, maybe, swapping drouhty kisses in the heel of a ditch at the close of day."

Gladys, who had never heard of Synge, was sniffing too hard to comprehend these strange sounds, was remembering the Golden Treasury. "I could not love thee dear so much," she

said, "loved I not honour more," but this time Norman was trying to light his pipe upside down and her observation went unheard.

Though the lovers might not have been quite at one in the wording of their parting, in spirit they were indivisible. All that their lips could not say in words they said in kisses, and when Norman stepped into the car which was to take him to freedom she pressed his cap-badge to her heart; and she in her white-painted bedroom, he in the bounding Rolls Royce, were together in memory in a summer-house which kept their secret and many another.

Norman's host and his friends had planned his escape with efficiency and thoroughness; no hitch marred its pleasing simplicity, no untoward incident halted the great car in its career. Across the Border the car stopped, manly hand grasped manly hand, blessings and good wishes and final words of advice were exchanged, then the car swung around and rushed into the rain which had cloaked every stage of Norman's adventure.

As he tramped miserably across the wet, but no longer neutral, Irish countryside he considered his good and evil fortune. Eight months had passed since he had tumbled unexpectedly into Wexford. Three of those months he had spent at the Curragh in comparative ease and indolence, five in luxury and in the arms of love; now once again superior officers would be waiting with the old irritating questions commencing with "When?", "Where?" and "How?", questions he would be quite willing to answer if he only knew the answers. Once again he would be accused of being absent without leave, when he had only forgotten the day and the week; once again there would be the pettish enquiries about cars he had parked and forgotten, annoying queries about planes left on runways, overbearing threats and truculent demands. He was not, he told himself, a fighting type, but if he had to fight he preferred to do it on his own terms, not bullied and bludgeoned by rules and the perpetual quest for reports on events past and therefore forgotten. He sighed, thinking of the Whitlow-Murphy brandy and the Whitlow-Murphy daughter, and then looked up to find a large rifle of antique model levelled at his stomach.

"And where might you be going at this hour of the night?" enquired an unfriendly voice, and immediately there started the old game of explanation, incredulity and the inevitable visit to the police-station.

This time there was no whiskey, no talk of dogs and horses, no songs of Galway Bay. The members of the Royal Ulster Constabulary present regarded him with dislike and suspicion, and it was almost a relief when the military lorry came for him.

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On his appearance at the R.A.F. camp he was again regarded with dislike. "What the devil do you mean by escaping?" asked a diminutive and irascible colonel, "Damned embarrassing you fellows make it for us."

Norman, who had expected a minor New York civic welcome, was too bewildered to reply, and in the following interrogation this initial bewilderment added to his habitual vagueness left the authorities with the impression that he was up to some obscure game of his own. It was necessary, they knew, to return him at once to the neutral country from whose internment camp he had escaped, but there was always the chance that he had become an agent of some kind for the Germans in Dublin and that he might now report to them something he had seen in the camp, though they could not imagine what that might be. For some time they considered placing him under arrest, but eventually and reluctantly he was put in charge of an escort and sent to the Border to be returned to the Irish authorities.

Norman, unversed in the niceties of international law, saw all this as merely an extreme example of bureaucratic extravagance, but he had served in H.M. forces long enough to accept what he did not understand.

The escort from the Curragh were friendly, curious and admiring, spoke of the imminent ending of the war and were quite willing to stop the car here and there to prove that the quality of whiskey had not noticeably deteriorated.

Sitting in a small snug in an obscure town, Norman peered through the golden liquid at a world all glorious with sun. Who said he was no fighting man? He had fought on the beaches, had qualified for membership of the Caterpillar Club, had escaped single-handed from internment and won to his love the most elegant colleen in all Ireland. "Heureux," he said, raising his glass, "qui comme Ulysses à fait un bon voyage."

"Sláinte!" said the Captain, "Eh, Joe, will you do the same again."



C. DAY LEWIS



Seen From The Train

Somewhere between Crewkerne
And Yeovil it was. On the left of the line
Just as the crinkled hills unroll
To the plain. A church on a small green knoll—
A limestone church,
And above the church
Cedar boughs stretched like hands that yearn
To protect or to bless. The whole

Stood up, antique and clear
As a cameo, from the vale. I swear
It was not a dream. Twice, thrice had I found it
Chancing to look as my train wheeled round it.
But this time I passed,
Though I gazed as I passed
All the way down the valley, that knoll was not there,
Nor the church nor the trees it, mounded.

What came between to unsight me? . . .
But suppose, only suppose there might be
A secret look in a landscape's eye
Following you as you hasten by,
And you have your chance—
Two or three chances
At most—to hold and interpret it rightly
Or it is gone for aye.

There was a time when men
Would have called it a vision, said that sin

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Had blinded me since to a heavenly fact.
Well, I have neither invoked nor faked
Any church in the air,
And little I care
Whether or no I shall see it again.
But blindly my heart is racked

When I think how, not twice or thrice,
But year after year in another's eyes
I have caught the look that I missed to-day
Of the church, the knoll, the cedars—nay,
The faith, too, they stood for,
The hope they were food for,
The love they prayed for, a fact beyond price—
And turned my eyes away,
And turned my eyes away.

DOMHNALL O'CONAILL



The Engine Driver

FORMERLY Mr. Keely was an engine driver but had been pensioned off from the Railway Company. He had had two sons die on him and he and his wife took in lodgers so that they could make a living. Once, I was a lodger of theirs.

They hadn't much space in their little house and he and his wife slept in a small bedroom off the kitchen. We lodgers had all our meals in the kitchen and there was always a big roaring fire blazing away in the grate. I liked being there a lot because it was not only warm from the big fire, but there was a friendly warmth about the two people. Both Mr. and Mrs. Keely called their lodgers by their Christian names. It's always nice hearing your name instead of the "Mister" which you always feel is not your name, so much as the name other people call you.

Mr. Keely always wore the engine driver's cap and dungarees and spent his day doing odd jobs for his wife, getting vegetables, the turf, and the sticks. It was pleasant to look through the kitchen window and see the old man standing talking to the children in the back lane, or to see him take off the cap, scratch his head and then mend a bit of fence. I noticed that he always spoke about conditions he had known on the Railway as though he were still living them. It was years since he had worked as a driver and he would say, "Now some days the line does be very bad, the signals are against you all the time."

One of the young men who was lodging with them used to show Mr. Keely the love letters his girl sent him. Both he and the old man would stand at the light end of the kitchen near the window, Mr. Keely would put on his spectacles, look over the love letter, then give advice, like "Don't be in a hurry now to tell her anything" If Mrs. Keely came near them they would both stare at her suspiciously and old Mr. Keely would say: "Now go away, Mary, women's heads are full of enough nonsense and gossip."

Most times Mrs. Keely would only be passing them to throw out some ashes, or fill a basin with water. She wouldn't be

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interested and all she'd say was, "Holy God, but the old men are worse'n the young ones."

Every day the old man would ask me questions about my work and would tell me about his. He didn't seem to realise that he was no longer an engine driver, and after some time I, too, took it for granted that he still worked for the Railway. "I'll not change now," he said once, "I'm a bit old for a new job." Then his wife sent him out with the shopping bag for messages.

On the kitchen walls were hung lots of framed photographs. One of them was of Mr. Keely, his wife, and their two boys. In his young days, before his hair had turned grey, he had dark hair and a tooth-brush moustache and looked like pictures I had seen of Hitler.

"You look like Hitler in that," I said, and Mr. Keely came over to the photograph and looked steadily into it. He shook his head, as though he wished to deny something he had remembered, then said, "Ah, that was many years ago." And he tore a strip off the newspaper, lit it from the fire and then lit his pipe. When he opened his mouth he did not speak; the smoke puffed out, a silent blue cloud.

Mrs. Keely, who was sitting on the most uncomfortable chair (as she always did), just looked at the photograph. Then she got up and went into the back yard. I could see her looking up at the sky, silent through the glass window, and she held her head the way a dog does when it wants to pick out a scent to find its direction. She came in and said, "There'll be rain." And I noticed her eyes were filled with tears.

Mr. Keely didn't get up early in the mornings. He would be lying asleep in his bedroom off the kitchen when I'd be at my breakfast. He was always talking in his sleep. And it would be about the Railway. Sometimes he'd be counting the wagons and shouting, as they do when they're shunting. And then it would be something like this, "How do you do? . . . The signals are against us, we'll have time for a smoke . . . we'll not make the junction at this rate . . ."

When I remarked about it to Mrs. Keely she said, "Ah, yes, he does be livin' in the old days half the nights. I don't notice it at all."

One of their sons had been killed on the Railway, the other

had died of T.B. Neither Mr. nor Mrs. Keely spoke about them and if ever their names came up in conversation, it was as though they had let slip a secret from their hearts, and they would change the subject.

When the Sweepstakes were being drawn, Mr. Keely kept coming in with the latest news. No matter what the conversation would be about, he would break into it with, "A hundred prizes to be drawn yet." He remarked that if he could go to the races with a hundred pounds he'd be the richest man in Ireland, because he'd be the happiest.

On the day I had to leave their house I wanted to buy him something nice, but I couldn't afford much so I bought him a couple of ounces of tobacco. He was so pleased with it that he said, "I'll not smoke that without thinking of you." Then he looked at the clock and said, "Two o'clock . . . a quarter of an hour before I've to be back on the job."

He lit his pipe and sat by the fire. I said goodbye to him and his wife. I couldn't say anything except tell them that I'd been very comfortable with them. But that wasn't true, I hadn't been comfortable, I'd been happy.

And as I sat in the train for Galway, I kept on hoping that I'd go back to where Mr. Keely and his wife lived, that I'd go back and see them again before they died.



ERNEST GEBLER

You'll Die Howling

THE sound of footsteps suddenly increased as her boots left the sandy side of the road and she crossed the cobbled space before the bar entrance.

He pitched back the bedclothes, heaved himself out with a grunt and angrily, on knotted feet, hobbled to the window.

The key, by then, was turning and clicking bad-temperedly in the front door below. Her voice came pitching up out of the still, soft air: "Joe, Joe, you've put the bolt on the door, you old eejit."

He parted the curtain, cocked his head sideways and villianously lengthened his upper lip, and peered out into the darkness through half-closed eyes. Let her wait for her answer and cool off; but, in reality, he needed the pause himself to work up his temper and give him breath and courage to plunge his voice out at her. "Who is that? What is it? What do ye want?" he called. "Who is that there, wakening me up in the middle of the night?"

"If you took the bottle out of your mouth long enough you'd hear it's me—and it's not gone twelve yet. You wait," she said good-humouredly, "until I get in at you and you'll hear something——"

"It's gone twelve long ago. Get away, whoever you are—we don't sell drink here this hour of the night."

"You've broke your promise," she shouted, "you've got a bottle of whisky in bed again . . . soon as my back's turned. Oh Joe! . . ."

"Don't dare talk to me like that," he shouted back, "whoever *you* are. She put that lie of whisky on me round the neighbourhood long enough, but that game is up—she's gone back to Dublin."

"Who's gone back to Dublin? . . . Have ye gone mad altogether?"

"My wife Nellie, the one as told everyone she's too young and too good for me. The one as goes off to see her lady friends all hours of the night when they have a nice young man in for her company. Oh, but that's all ended now. I've got a decent country woman coming in to look after me to-morrow."

"The drink's got you mad, man. *I'm* Nellie. You black-guard. A nice lot of whisky you must have got into you to-night."

"God's me witness I never heard the sound of your voice before. You're no good thing to be out on the roads this hour of the night—whatever you are. You sound like a tinker woman, so get away from this respectable house."

"Respectable house! Mother of God if it wasn't for me making something of your dirty, broken-down, cross-roads publichouse—an ill day for me I ever set foot in it. Do you want me to have to go round the yard and rouse the barman?"

"There's no bar-boy here. I give him the days' off he wanted to go to his mother's. Go on now and get away from that."

In the pause he could hear her deep, furious breathing. "Ah, Joe," she said quietly, her voice low and caressing, "let your own Nellie in. An' if ye deserve it I'll bring a drop up to warm us in bed."

"I don't know you. I said that. And I don't know where my wife is either. Gone off to her fancy man with a bottle of whisky hidden in the bottom of her basket. She thinks I don't know; she thinks she can put it all on me. A nice name she's give me since she planted herself in Drumgarrin." How long could he keep it up? Well, until she started taking the house to pieces brick by brick.

"There wasn't half a glass in the bottom of the bottle, Joe," she said sadly and pityingly. "You wouldn't begrudge old Nanny Keogh that much on her dying bed?"

"On her dying bed!" the old man jeered, beginning to shiver in his nightshirt. "And she in here as strong as a horse, Sunday, pouring the best port wine into her trying to drink the men under the table. You tinker woman you, don't mention that bag of phlegm in my hearing . . . robbing me . . . She's one of the ones my wife keeps company with, lashing my profits down her gullet an' doin' nothing in return but back-biting me. But my wife's neglected me and my house and my business for the likes of her for the last time. I'm going back to my bed now before I get a cold."

His shoulders twitched around his silent laughter as he groped back to the bed; not to clamber in; why now that he had his courage in both hands and begun the game by God he'd get the last drop out of it; he'd put a stop to her gadding about once and for all. He wrapped himself in the quilt and blankets and sat down on a chair by the window.

"Joe," she called, "for the last time, Joe, are you going to let me in?"

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"I don't know you," he said, "I don't know you," his shoulders shaking. He had to bury his face in the blanket and quilt clutched about him and muffle his whinnies of laughter.

"Let me in," she screamed.

"I don't know you," he repeated idiotically, between smothered wheezings of mirth. "I don't know who you are, and that's the truth."

She stepped back several paces from the house front and stood, a small, round-figured, sturdy woman, with her legs apart and hands on hips; her voice, full of strength and courage knew no viciousness or even any bitterness; an alert player, she shuttlecocked her voice back at him: "Ye slobbery oul' fiend, ye."

The lower sash of the window was raised; he thrust his stubbled chin between the edges of the stiff lace curtains and narrowed his eyes down at her dim shape, angrily. How dare she call him slobbery! The best in the land dribbled their porridge at sometime—if they didn't have any teeth. How dare she. A quiver of passion began to flutter his voice. "What kind of city slut's talk is that?—that—that I hear before my house—get away back to the back streets where ye belong——"

"Oh, well then my fine fellow, as sure as God's in heaven, I'll see you prostrate yet with no one to raise a finger for you. You can all play the big fellow with a bottle of whisky under your belt—but don't forget!—don't forget!—there's a day of reckoning comes for us all."

"Ah," he bawled out over her, "ah save your screeches for hell, me good woman."

"I'm praying that the day is near when you'll be laid low."

He saw how she stood, stolidly, powerfully, her body might have been a tree stump set in the expanse of cobbles; and it was as if a faint pride and pleasure brushed softly against the back of his righteous anger. "There's a tongue," he mocked, "to be on any Christian woman."

"I'm warning you, Joseph Adams, if you don't come down and open that door you'll have my curse on you."

"Your curse is worth nothing," he said soberly, "you're nothing but a city molly."

"You'll discover to your cost what it's worth. You'll die howling!—there's my curse on you—as your grandfather before you when he threwed himself down the well. Woe betide you if I do. Don't think I can't see you sitting up there grinning

like a dirty oul pilgarlick. Falling out of my standing with the tiredness—just don't try my patience too far, just don't, that's all."

"I don't know you," he said, "didn't you hear me?"

"If I'm alive to-morrow, please God, you'll pay dearly for this night's work. It's a mystery to me why I haven't let you drink yourself to death before now and be well shut of you."

"Oh, that's what you're waiting for, isn't it! You'll wait a long time yet."

"That's gratitude for you, ye half-blind oul' bag of bones, if I didn't feed you with a spoon you'd be dead long ago——"

"There's the language of a tinker for you! Oh, listen to that . . . That's what I got marrying a Dublin rossie; a string of bad language from start to finish——"

"And proud of it. And what are you when all's said and done? A savage out of the wilds. A scabby bag of misery any of my people would give a penny to in the street."

"Your people! Merciful God, where do you bury your dead, woman?—they all died in the Union long ago; you never had a relation you could speak to in daylight till you came to me."

"And, by God, it was then I got a right set of hardships, when I fell into your cold comfort. Oh, God will punish you! I never met a fiend on two legs till I met Joseph Adams. You won't do the masterful very long if I go and bring the priest down to you."

"Go on then—it's only four miles."

"That you may be paralysed in the morning, that's my prayer for you."

"Tinkerwoman! That's what we call your kind around here. As I look to be saved please God I wouldn't be guilty of some of the things you've said to-night for a fortune."

"If you think I'm going to stand here all night getting a pain in my face listening to you, you're mistaken," she said; and picking up her basket marched off round the side of the house, banging the iron gate with a shattering clamour.

She strode past the walled well and into the back yard, where her morning's washing hung limply on the lines. The back doors were bolted also and the two windows latched. What a childish trick! second childhood, God help her. But that had been a bad thing to say to him about his grandfather down the well, she thought. He didn't like to speak of that. So perhaps there was a way to settle him quicker than he imagined.

She went back to the well at the side of the house, looked

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down into the deep, black shaft and then up at the sky. After a moment she seated herself on the damp circular wall and folded her hands in her lap.

She looked at the house, and then around her, to the dark hills. The night was luminously bright, although the moon lay just behind the high ridge of Kilavullagh; for over the back of the mountain bright banners of cloud streamed as if out of a cauldron of seething white light.

The house stood at the intersection of two mountain roads of granite dust; each spoke of road led into into a valley, and one eventually to the city, eighteen miles distant; the building, two-storied, slated, publikehouse and grocery, stood alone, its nearest neighbour a half a mile away.

She peeped sideways down into the well again, and made up her mind. A stone wouldn't do; that would make the wrong sound. The washing on the back lines caught her eye. Desperate measures were necessary. She gathered all the washing into a bundle and brought it to the well-side. With a couple of heavy stones for a core the bundle made quite a sizeable white figure where she left it sitting on the well wall.

Perhaps he wanted her to suffer the shame of having to knock up one of the cottages and ask for a bed for the night; she'd teach him. And very fortunate it was that this end of the house was a blind end; he couldn't see anything that went on at the well unless he came out.

She appeared again before the bar window and looked up. The old villain. "Are you there, Joseph Adams?"

"Who is that?" he called, ducking back and trying to make his voice sound as if it came from the bed.

"You know very well who it is."

"I don't know you," he said lamely, unexpectedly at a loss and wondering how he could finish it all up and let her in without losing face.

"You've never seen me yet when I've been put to it," she cried, getting a sob into her voice. "They said this wilderness with its wet and stones would be the death of me," she sobbed, "well, you can have your wish—but my death'll be on your head, remember that, Joseph Adams! No wonder they say you starved and murdered your other wife and your sons ran away from you. It's come to me now; but there's always the well left for *me too*; I've said it often enough." Running and tottering back towards the side of the house again, she cried, "There's always the well!"

"Nellie," he shouted, his white, stricken face thrust out into the night air, "Nellie!"

ERNEST GEBLER

She reached the well, with a broad smile, pushed the bundle over, leaned after it and screamed swooping into the depths. Her cry boomed out into the stillness hollowly, followed by a soft, heavy splash. As sure as God was above he'd want to be stone deaf altogether not to hear that.

His shouting was lost in the house; he was coming down the stairs. With her shoes in her hand she ran quietly into the back yard, to circle the house. "Howl, can't you," she hissed at the dog, standing outside his be-sacked box wagging his tail, "when there's a death in the family—oh, God forgive me." Then past the hen house and into the side garden, banging her toes against a stone, she was in time to peep over the rose bush and see him issuing from the front door like a madman, trailing his quilts and blanket after him. He had hardly reached the iron gates and the well corner of the house, a huge wounded bird flopping through the dimness, before she was darting out behind him from the garden and in through the front door.

The old man fell against the iron gates, clawed himself through, tripped, gathered himself up, leaving blankets and quilt behind, and stumbled to the well.

"Oh, Nellie," he moaned, "oh, Nellie;" and if the Devil stood before him there was nothing else he could say, over and over again: "Oh, Nellie, don't leave me." Merciful God, there was no rope—and the ladder—the ladder——

"Nellie," he howled down the well, "Nellie, don't leave me!"

Her voice came from the front of the house, from the bedroom window, it seemed: "Who's that in the yard? Who's there?"

He shrank against the well wall, quivering, choking for breath.

"Get away out of that, or I'll set the dog on you," said her voice.

Somehow, after apparently hours of fearful stillness, he edged back to the gates, picked up his wrappings and stole out before the house. Then he whispered in his old man's broken voice: "Nellie?"

"Who's that?" she asked, leaning out through the window. "I don't ever seem to have seen you before. You look like a right poor old madman to me. Get off about your business, now."

He raised his hand to his head weakly, trying to bless himself, muttering: "She said she'd haunt me. The family was cursed . . . the grandfather . . ."

IRISH WRITING

"What's that?" she called out, loudly.

"Tell me—you're not dead?"

About to answer, she checked herself. If she took the bundle out of the well first thing in the morning without him seeing he'd never know. "Come up to me," she said in an attempt at a ghostly voice, "come up to bed, my love . . ."

He did not move. In the end she went down to him; he backed away, dazed, yet trembling, so that she had to run after him, seize him by the arm and drag him into the house.

Even after she had put him to bed and they both lay, propped up, sipping hot whisky and sugar, he did not speak for a long time. "Stop quaking," she said kindly, "you fearful, masterful man."

"Oh, Nellie," he said, shaking his head sadly. Then he moved his hand, and prodded her; she was solid all right.

"You'll need a few new shirts," she said, mysteriously smiling.

"Ah, they say you should never marry the barmaid . . . Oh, Nellie how could you do a thing like that on me?"

"I'm dead," she said, also gazing up at the fire-lit ceiling,

"Huh?" the old man said, withdrawing his hand.

"So you'd better behave yourself," she said, "from now on."



BLANAID SALKELD



Bee

These last August hours
the fur and tinsel bee
dips to green frippery
and the tall flowers
kisses the clover
summer is over;
slides in a dive at
his scented house
settles to drowse
dark and private:
fur and tinsel goes
to sleep in his clothes.

GERALDINE CUMMINS



Mad Sheeogue

BEFORE the days of the Famine in Ireland Mad Sheeogue was young and beautiful. She married Michael Connolly, a fisherman, who farmed a few acres of land, and the two lived together in a cottage above Coumeenole Bay. Then there came the year when the potatoes rotted on their stalks a second time, when there was no food on the land, and even the fish seemed to have deserted the sea. Every one was starving. Michael and his wife lived almost wholly on dilisk, a seaweed picked up on the shore, until he caught the famine fever. Hearing that relief might be obtained at Dingle, twelve miles away, they set out one morning for it. The long tramp in the hot day was too much for Michael's strength; at the bottom of Marhin Pass he fell down on the road and could go no further. In a little while his wife guessed that he was dying. The child she carried was ailing too; and if he was to be saved she must find food for him before the next evening. She left her husband to die alone. And she heard his feeble cries behind her as she hurried away weeping.

A great storm, blowing up across the Blasket Islands from the Atlantic, caught her in a hurricane of wind and rain near the summit of Marhin Pass. Knowing that such weather would kill the child if exposed to its fury, she sheltered herself among the gorse bushes in a gully.

All through the night the storm raged overhead, and when dawn broke she was nursing a dead child in her arms. Six months later she came out of the Dingle Hospital changed beyond recognition, and with all memory of her trouble blotted from her mind.

As the years went by there was no one to take care of her or help her. The young generation that grew up in that part of the country after the Famine did not know her history, only the tradition of her great beauty remained. They were curiously puzzled by the tall white-haired woman in the ragged shawl, whom they met in the mountainy places and in the quiet fields, who would often try and question them, and then finding no means of expression, with a pitiful movement of the hands would turn away.

One day the mystery was solved—a child sickened and died at a farmhouse at which she had stayed the night. What evidence of her origin could be more conclusive—she was a changeling. It was well known that the People from beyond the World loved young girls of great beauty and often stole them away, placing in their stead some old, deformed and malicious creature without soul, whose eye and whose very touch were evil. So Mad Sheeogue, as the old people of the village and neighbourhood christened her, was shunned by all. For no one living on the promontory of Slea Head doubted the power of the beings who live in the hills, in the old forts, and in the shadowy mists that wreath the mountains.

She fell into great want. The most hospitable people in the world drove her from their doors with stones. She might have starved to death if the landlord of the district had not heard of her plight and given her a cottage and a small pension. No one was ever seen speaking to her, and her life passed in a complete solitude. She had to walk seven miles over the Pass to buy food from the schoolmaster's store, as they would not serve her in the shop in Dunquin, so ingrained was the fear of the evil fortune she carried with her.

The little cottage lay snugly enough in the fold of a hill, yet Mad Sheeogue was abroad most hours of the day travelling the mountain and the roads. She always seemed to be seeking, always hurrying. No stormy weather could deter her from her purpose; and the few who passed her on the lonely roads were often frightened by the look of longing in her eyes. Many summers passed, and many times the gorse fires died upon the hills, and still the old woman sought patiently. She was not unhappy. But she felt she had lost something very precious to her, and though the memory of it had faded from her mind, she searched on, hoping that some day she would find it.

One September day she followed the road along the cliffs that jutted out towards the Blasket Islands. It was a warm afternoon, and Mad Sheeogue halted to rest. A hundred feet below her lay a tiny bay in the heart of the rock overshadowed by great arches of stone. She looked down at it, then rising from her seat searched for a path to the sands, and across her face crept the piteous, far-away look of the blind. Near the bottom of the cliff the winding path ceased abruptly in a ridge of land on which stood a roofless cottage facing westward. The cliffs sheltered it from the winds, sun-flecked shadows flitted about it, and away to the islands lay a heaving, sparkling stretch of sea.

IRISH WRITING

Her mind groping slowly for some thought which eluded her, Mad Sheeogue entered the cottage. At first sight there was nothing remarkable within. The usual tangle of weeds and nettles grew in profusion on what had once been an earthen floor. But on the white wall above was traced a black cross blurred by the passage of time. She stared intently at it for a moment, then, catching her breath, sank into the long grass with a bitter cry. There was a knocking at her brain—a thronging of ancient memories, a crowding of innumerable ghosts; they were all struggling to enter, and she tried to drive them from her, in her agony pressing her face to the earth.

For a while she lay there, and rose at last shuddering, and went out by the opening between the two walls. A little stream flowed down the face of the cliff. Softly there rose through the air the murmurous peace of the sea. The old woman looked westward and a vague image, filling her with wonder, came to her from the past. She saw a young woman with a child in her arms and knew her to be herself; she heard the grating of a coracle on the shingle, she saw a man leaping from it and coming to meet her with silver fish in his hands. The man and woman laughed together and played with the child.

There came a change: the picture darkened. Old dead pain leaped into life again. And though the sun was not dulled and the sea still sparkled stretching away in long, blue folds, delight passed, only sadness lingered, unutterable, infinite. And now she remembered all that had been hidden before. The bay and the cross on the wall brought back clearly the memory of her former happiness. Then came the horror darkening all things like a black flood covering the world. And the thirty years of seeking ended with the discovery that what she sought was merely the smile of a child.

She wept silently as she climbed the last hill to her home. There was nothing to live for now—nothing to seek, nothing to hope—only regrets, only sorrows remained. The little house stood dark and deserted. She turned to look back to the islands with a sob and a half-muttered prayer.

Sunset still quivered above the Blaskets. A little boy with dark, laughing eyes ran up the road through the red dusk calling to her. He told her his name was Hugh Coghlan, and he asked her to show him his way home. She laughed and drew him to her, hungrily kissing him and stroking his cheek with her hand, till he grew frightened. Then, to comfort him, she told queer old tales and crooned snatches of old songs forgotten for over thirty years. Time slipped away. The child

listened with a rapt, awed face gazing up at the old woman through the darkling light.

On the morrow there was still a dim glow in the west as Kieran Coghlan descended from his cart at the foot of Marhin Pass and consulted the skies anxiously. They told him he would not reach his cottage at the other side of the Pass before dark, and he searched for his lantern in the straw of the cart. Then he remembered he had left it at home, believing he would leave the Dingle fair earlier in the day. He led his horse forward carefully, for without a light the way was a little dangerous. A narrow gully, almost completely hidden by heath and bracken, ran beside the road: it was very deep—at least the height of a man—and still dry, though a torrent fed by mountain streams fled through it after the late autumn rains.

Darkness gathered swiftly with a rising wind, which increased as the shadows deepened on the plain behind. To banish the lonely song of the wind from his mind, Kieran began thinking of the future, of the time when his thatched cottage at Dunquin would be deserted and he would build a two-storeyed house in the centre of his own land—a wonderful house, with a slated roof, facing out across the Atlantic to the Blasket Islands. He had planned it for his only son, little Hugh, and for him he had worked early and late in shallow-soiled fields, tramped to distant fairs in bitter windy dawns, risked his life fishing in stormy seas, and earned the title of the nearest man in all the kingdom of Kerry. He knew the neighbours in Dunquin disliked him. They might have overlooked his meanness if he had not refused shelter to the tramps and tinkers of the road. But their opinion mattered little to him. Hugh would be a rich man when he was grown, owning two coracles, living in a two-storeyed house with a slated roof, the envy of all.

He led his horse forward slowly, his mind deep in the wonder of the future. The wind had fallen. The night had grown very still. It was no longer difficult to make out the face of the road. Towards the north-west there had come a slight rift in the heavy darkness of the skies and a few stars glimmered through it sadly. As the road became clear to the eye, the silence was broken swiftly and strangely. A sobbing cry sounded across the empty country, a cry with a wild human note running through it, full of agony and terror.

Kieran quickly moved forward, calling out that he was coming, that he would help. The cry abruptly ceased. He called again—there was only the same silence. The rift in the cloud

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widened; the slope in the mountain appeared in a darker and clearer outline. Kieran could see no one before him, no one behind. His senses suddenly became apprehensive of the vast solitude. He fell into an attitude of listening. And then, when all was quiet, the low, heart-breaking sobbing sighed through the night again.

It came from somewhere near the summit of the Pass. And the light from the west, the sea, and the breaking clouds cast a milky glow over the rough mountain land and the white track that ribboned in and out between boulders far down to distant valleys. There was no one visible in all that pale world. But still it continued, sinking to a sigh at times, then sobbing out again—a wailing of immeasurable woe.

Kieran urged his horse forward with whip and voice, and the cart sped swiftly through the dimness, jolting dangerously from side to side on the rough winding road. Crying on the hills invariably foreboded the coming of death or sorrow in the valley. His thoughts leaped forward to the one catastrophe that could overshadow all his life. Something must have happened to Hugh. The boy was hurt—or ill—or dead.

It was not until the lights of Dunquin glittered below him that he reined in again, and as he drove more slowly he thought of his journey's end. The tattered picture of the Sacred Heart hanging above the hearth, his wife spinning by the light of the little lamp, the kettle boiling on the fire, the old brown jack warming beside it, and in the room beyond, Hugh sleeping quietly. Such things were tangible and real and reassuring, it scarcely seemed possible that they could change.

On reaching home, Kieran stood hesitating in the light of the doorway until his wife, who had heard his footsteps, called to him from within. He entered and found the quiet room unchanged. And he felt a sudden quick rush of gladness when he learnt, in answer to an eager question, that nothing had happened to Hugh.

Yet as Norah prepared his supper, his thoughts went back to the Pass, and he scarcely answered her when she spoke to him. At length she turned from the dresser with a smile that was a little reproachful.

"You're a fright for blackness to-night, Kieran. Tell me now, what would be ailing you? Is it a poor price you're after getting for the heifers?"

"'Tis not then." And after some hesitation Kieran told of the wailing in the Pass. He had scarcely finished when he heard a crash of breaking china.

Two cups had fallen from Norah's hand to the floor; she was trembling—her face had turned a sickly white.

"'Twas queer and strange," he said; "but don't let it be frightening you, acoudh."

"'Tis a warning," she whispered fearfully.

Her trouble played upon his own, but he tried to reassure her. "Yerra, nonsense; have sense. Maybe 'twas the wind singing in the Pass."

"There's no wind singing this night," she answered, slowly, and then broke into quick pleading. "Oh, Kieran, don't be angered with me. I couldn't help it—indeed I couldn't help it! Yesterday I was busy weeding in the field and Hugh strayed from me—and 'twasn't till the fall of night I searched for him—and I found him with the old woman on the hill—with Mad Sheeogue—in her arms!"

"Mad Sheeogue!" Kieran started to his feet, shaking his wife's hand from his shoulder. The two stood opposite to each other, with dry, quivering lips, while the stories told of the old woman crowded through their minds. Before her power for evil had been recognised she had held Michael Farrell's son in her arms and within a week he had died. It was also well known that she had cast her eye on little Mary Cullen, and shortly after the child was seized with a wasting sickness that nothing could cure. One autumn evening on Ballyferriter sands, when he was emptying his nets, young Jack Curran, the boldest boy in the district, said a few kindly words to her. A fortnight later he went fishing and never returned. Other tales of sorrow Norah and Kieran remembered. And they could hear their own hearts beating in the silence as fear swept down upon them.

There seemed no way to grapple with this power. It was beyond them—vague, intangible, unseen. It could no more be checked in its course than the storm-fiends sweeping up across the Blaskets from the north and west. Norah was the first to break the silence. She spoke listlessly, without any hope in her voice. "Maybe—maybe there's a cure for the evil eye."

"There's no cure for the touch of an evil hand. D'you mind the time little Farrell died? 'Twas from the touch of her hand."

"Still and all, if I burn two sheaves of ripe oats above the rath in the field beyond——"

"Ah, what's the use of talking? There's nothing in this wide, earthly world can save Hugh now. Norah"—Kieran's voice was full of pain as he leant forward—" 'tis the crying for the dead I'm after hearing in the Pass . . ."

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She trembled and did not answer. He went unsteadily into the other room. There, the rays of the candle as he held it aloft fell on Hugh's face. His mouth took a roguish twist, and as he slept he smiled. Kieran turned and groped his way back to the kitchen.

"Aye, surely 'twas the crying for one that will soon be gone. 'Twas the crying for the dead."

With the lifting of the mists that darkened her mind Mad Sheeogue realised that she was utterly alone. She longed fiercely, hopelessly, for Hugh. He took the place of her own lost child, and sleeping and waking his image was ever with her.

One morning, however, there was a change. The old woman rose early, and with a new hope in her eyes walked the seven miles to the schoolmaster's store, where her sole purchase was three sticks of "Peggy's Leg." She returned home triumphantly, and, having baked a savoury cream cake, descended the hill in the direction of Kieran Coughlan's cottage.

Crouching behind a fence Mad Sheeogue waited till Hugh strayed across the road from the field where his father was working. She called him gently by his name; he went to her. Then, her old eyes lighting up with love, she begged him to come and listen to more stories. As he slipped his hand into hers he remembered he had promised his mother never to go near her again. She was a bad woman—so bad the Holy Mother of God never smiled on her. Reluctantly he drew his hand away.

The old woman was prepared for this and held out a fat stick of "Peggy's Leg." Hugh's good intentions could not resist such a bribe. Sucking with noisy joy his hand stole back into hers, and the two climbed the hill together.

The glow from the fire brightened the dull room, and shadows danced across the walls. Hugh nestled in Mad Sheeogue's arms munching cream cake and sucking "Peggy's Leg," while she told him tales of the cluricaune's crocks of gold and the fairies who dance on the lake.

Outside the sea grew darker and darker. The mountains vanished in the driving rain; the light that came through the window was ominously pale and thin. And still the old woman continued her story-telling, the elfish gaiety and sorrow of mountain winds laughing and singing through her voice, a perfect happiness shining in her eyes.

Hasty footsteps sounded outside, the door was flung

violently open and Kieran Coughlan appeared on the threshold. Something in the old woman's manner made him pause and draw back a little, edging to the wall.

She was first to speak, her sunken lips quivering: "You're after wanting him?"

"I am, and what's more, it's neither sight nor sound you'll ever get of him again."

"For ever and always?" The despair in the old woman's voice was lost on the young man. With a lonely gesture of her hands she leant forward, pleading. "Wisha now, you won't be taking him from me, and you knowing the way it is. Sure, it's only a small share of him I'm wanting; and, indeed, it's little joy I have in life."

"Come on away, Hugh," called Kieran. The boy came reluctantly. With his hand on Hugh's arm, Kieran felt the child could not be spirited off. His confidence returned. "Listen here: what right have you to be drawing Hugh after you and casting spells and Hell's charms on him?" he asked, anger growing in his voice as the fear left it.

"Sure me heart was hungering for the child," said the old woman. "Ah, you'll let him climb the hill to me again, stranger. For it's a sad and lonely woman I am, and the long days and nights creeping by, and I thinking of all that's been and all that'll never be again. Let him stay with me awhile—an hour you'd be busy in the fields. You wouldn't miss the time he'd be gone from you. Oh, it's an empty house that has no little child laughing and crying through it."

Kieran turned on her abruptly, his face alive with hate. "D'ye hear me now: if you ever lay hands on Hugh again, by God, I'll choke the life from you . . ."

That night Norah Coughlan hung anxiously over her son as he tossed to and fro, his cheeks flushed, his hands burning with fever. Nothing could soothe him or still his restlessness; and during the two days that followed husband and wife scarcely spoke to each other in their anguish. They did not send for the dispensary doctor, for they felt it was useless; the boy's illness was of an unearthly origin; Mad Sheeogue had cast a blight upon him.

On the afternoon of the second day she could bear it no longer. She came to her husband white and haggard. "Let

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you go and fetch the priest from Dingle," she implored; "he's the only one could save the boy."

Kieran shook his head. "For 'all the gold in the world I wouldn't cross Marhin Pass to-night. Twice I'm after hearing the crying for the dead up there. The third time I hear it, Hugh will die."

"You'll not be hearing it and the holy Father with you," said Norah, and she did not rest until he started for Dingle the following morning.

Night had fallen when he reached the bottom of the Pass with Father Roche, a young priest. It was a pale, violet night, and the moon hung between the mountains softly lighting the waste country.

After the storm the air was pure and cold. A fluttering breeze sighed through the heath, so gently it did not even muffle a low, sobbing cry. The cry was followed by wailing which seemed to rise out of the ground beneath them. Father Roche jumped down from the cart, calling to Kieran. The farmer did not answer, but stood in the middle of the road staring vacantly before him.

Seeing he could get no help from him, the priest unfastened the lantern from the cart and flashed it over the darkness before them. There was not a soul in sight, and still the wailing floated desolately through the night. Kieran, his hands to his ears, had thrown himself down on the heath, shuddering.

As the cry rang out, the wailing ceased. In the hush that followed the priest paced the road thoughtfully. Suddenly he remembered the gully, and knelt down beside it, searching the hollow with the lantern. He heard a faint rustling, and there, crouching in the darkness, rocking to and fro in an abandonment of grief, was Mad Sheeogoe.

When, after much coaxing, Father Roche persuaded her to return to the road, Kieran attacked her fiercely; but a threat from the priest to return to Dingle quietened him.

They left the old woman at her cottage, and hurried on through the darkness to Dunquin. Wild with fear, Kieran felt he must reach home before the evil beings summoned by the old woman had accomplished their end. His faith in the priest was infinite, if only he arrived in time. If he was too

late, he promised himself, he would go up in the dawn and set a light to Mad Sheeogue's cottage.

But Hugh was no longer restless; he lay breathing softly in a profound sleep. The fever had spent itself, and they saw he was out of danger.

On his way home the priest visited Mad Sheeogue. With care and gentleness he at last drew from her the trouble that had shadowed her life. Nothing, he found, could ease her sorrow; and when he rose to go she did not look at him. She was mourning for all that had been and would never be again.



JEAN-PAUL SARTRE



Herostratus

(Translated by A. J. Leventhal)

MEN must be seen from a height, I put out the light and went to the window; they did not even suspect that they could be seen from above. They look after their front views and sometimes their backs, but the effect is calculated for the benefit of observers of a range of a yard and a half. Who has ever thought about the shape of a bowler hat seen from a sixth storey? They don't bother to protect their shoulders and skulls with light colours and bright cloth, they don't know how to combat that great enemy of Humanity—downward perspective. I bent over and began to laugh. What had become of that famous erect posture of which they are so proud, they were squashed against the pavement while two long legs crawled out from beneath their shoulders. On the balcony of the sixth storey is where I have spent my whole life. Moral superiority must be supported by material symbols or it will collapse. What exactly is my superiority to other men due to? It is nothing more or less than a superiority of position. I put myself above the human thing that is in me to contemplate it. That is why I love the tower of Notre Dame, the Eiffel Tower, the Sacre Coeur, and my sixth storey in the Rue Delambre. They are all excellent symbols.

Sometimes I have to get down to the streets, to go to the office, for instance. I felt smothered; when one is on the same level as other men it is much harder to look on them as ants: *they impinge*. I once saw a chap dead on the street. He had fallen on his face and someone had turned him on his back; he was covered with blood. I saw his open eyes, his suspicious look and all that blood. I said to myself "This is nothing; it is not any more upsetting than new paint, someone has daubed red paint on his nose, that is all." But I felt a horrible softening spread from my legs to my neck and I fainted. They took me into a chemist's shop, banged me on the back, and gave me a drink. I could have killed them.

I knew they were my enemies, but they didn't know it. They liked each other, they rubbed shoulders. They would come

to my help because they thought I was like themselves. But if they had the slightest inkling of the truth, they would have beaten me up. And so they did later on, when they arrested me and knew who I was. They third-degreed me, they man-handled me for two hours at the police station, they hit me and boxed me and twisted my arm, they took off my trousers and in the end they threw my eyeglass on the floor and while I was looking for it on all fours they laughed and kicked me on the behind. I always foresaw they would end up by beating me: I'm not strong and I can't defend myself. Some of them had been watching me for a long time, the big ones. They jostled me on the streets for fun just to see what I would do. I said nothing, I pretended not to understand, but they got me. I was afraid of them, it was a presentiment, but you could be quite sure I had more serious reasons than that for hating them.

From that point of view, things were better dating from the day I bought a revolver. You feel strong when you carry one of those things that explode and make a noise. On Sundays I took it out and put it quietly into my trousers' pocket when I went for a walk usually along the boulevards. I could feel it dragging at my trouser leg like a crab. I felt it cold against my thigh. But gradually it became warm by contact with my body.

On Sundays I got into the habit of stationing myself outside the Chatelet at the end of the classical concert. Towards six o'clock I heard bells ringing and the attendant came out and fastened back the glass doors with hooks. That was the beginning, the crowd came out slowly: the people walked airily, their eyes still dreamy, their heads still full of pleasing ideas, some looked about them in surprise. The street must have looked completely blue to them. Then they smiled mysteriously. They passed from one world to another. It was in the other that I was waiting for them. I slid my right hand into my pocket and gripped as hard as I could at the butt of my weapon. In an instant I had visions of myself about to fire on them, I knocked them down like ninepins, they fell one on top of the other and the survivors in panic fled back into the theatre breaking the glass doors. It was a very exciting game; at the end of it my hands were trembling and I had to drink a brandy at Dreher's to put me right. I would not have killed the women, I would have shot them in the hips or in the calves to make them dance.

I had not made up my mind yet. But I took to doing everything as if my decision had been made. I began by settling the relevant details. I went to practise in a shooting booth at

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the Denfert-Rochereau fair. My cartridges were not up to much, but men offer a big target especially when one fires point blank. After that I thought about my publicity. I chose a day when all my colleagues would be at the office. A Monday morning. I was purposely very nice to them though I couldn't bear to shake hands with them, it disgusted me. They took off their gloves to say good-morning, they had an obscene habit of stripping their hands, of turning back their gloves and slipping them slowly down their fingers, exposing the fat crumpled nakedness of the palm. As for me I always kept my gloves on.

There isn't much to do on a Monday morning, the typist from the commercial department had just brought us the receipts. Lemer cier joked with her pleasantly and when she had gone out they discussed her charms with bored competence. Then they talked about Lindbergh. They loved Lindergh. I said to them: "As for me I like black heroes."

"Negroes?" asked Massé.

"No, black in the sense of black magic. Lindbergh is a white hero. He doesn't interest me."

"Go and see how easy it is to cross the Atlantic," said Bouxin dryly. I explained my idea of a black hero.

"An anarchist?" went on Lemer cier.

"No," I said gently. "Anarchists love men in their own way."

"Then they must be cracked."

But Massé who had some culture intervened at this point: "I know the sort of fellow, he is called Herostratus. He wanted to become famous, and all he could think of doing was to burn the temple of Ephesus, one of the seven wonders of the world."

"And who was the architect?"

"I don't remember," he confessed, "I don't think his name is ever known."

"Really? And you remember the name of Herostratus. You see he wasn't so far out."

At this remark the conversation ended, but I was happy, they would remember it at the right moment. As for me I had never heard of Herostratus and his story put new life into me. He was dead for over 2,000 years and his deed still shone like a black diamond. I began to think my destiny would be short and tragic. At first this frightened me, but I got used to it. Looked at in one way it is appalling, but it does give the passing minute greater power and beauty. When I went down the street I felt a strange strength in my body. I had my revolver with me—that thing which explodes and makes a noise. But it was no longer from it that I got confidence, it was from myself:

I was a being of the same type as revolvers, crackers, bombs. I too at the end my dull life would explode and illuminate the world with a brief short flame like a magnesium flare. At that time I used often to dream the same dream. I was an anarchist lying in wait for the Tsar and with me I had an infernal machine. At the appointed hour the procession went by, the bomb went off and the Tsar and I and three officers bedecked with gold were blown up before the eyes of the crowd.

I spent weeks now without going to the office. I walked along the boulevards amongst my future victims or else I shut myself up in my room and made plans: I was sacked in the beginning of October. I spent my leisure composing the following letter of which I made two hundred copies:—

Sir;

You are famous and your works run into editions of 30,000. I am going to tell you why. Humanism is in your blood, you are lucky. You expand when you are in company. As soon as you see someone like you, you are in sympathy with him without ever knowing him. You like his body, the way he is jointed, his legs will open and shut at will, above all his hands. You are pleased that he has five fingers on each hand and that he can touch his other fingers with his thumb; you are delighted when your neighbour takes a cup from the table because he does it in a typically human fashion, which you often described in your works, and is much less nimble and quick than a monkey; isn't that so? But so much more intelligent. You also like man's flesh, his walk like that of a badly wounded man who is being rehabilitated, his look of inventing walking at each step and the famous gaze that quells the wild beast.

You will be curious to know, I suppose, what a man that doesn't love other men is like. Very well, it is myself, and I like them so little that very soon I am going to kill a half a dozen of them. Perhaps you will ask: "Why only a half a dozen?" Because my revolver only holds six cartridges. Monstrous, isn't it, and moreover a completely foolish act. But I tell you I *can't* like them. I know how you feel. Like you I have seen men chewing slowly with an observant eye and turning over the pages of a journal of economics with the left hand. Is it my fault that I prefer watching seals eat? Man can do nothing with his face that doesn't turn into a game of character reading. When he eats, keeping his mouth closed, the corners of his mouth go up and down and he looks as if he were incessantly going from serenity to tearful surprise. You like that. I know it. You call it the watchfulness of the Spirit. But it sickens me: I don't know why: I was born like that.

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I am soon going to take my revolver, I will go down to the street and see what I can score over *them*. Good-bye, sir, perhaps it is you I am going to meet. You will never know with what pleasure I will blow your brains out. If not, and that is more likely, read the papers to-morrow. You will see that a man named Paul Hilbert in a fit of madness felled five passers-by on the Boulevard Edgar-Quinet. You know better than anyone what the prose of the daily press is worth. You will understand that I am not a maniac. I am, on the contrary, very calm.

Yours sincerely,
Paul Hilbert.

I slipped the two hundred letters into two hundred envelopes and on them I wrote the addresses of two hundred French writers. Then I put the lot in the drawer of my table with six books of stamps.

During the next fortnight I went out very little and devoted myself to my crime. In the mirror where I looked at myself every now and then I remarked with pleasure the changes in my face. My eyes had grown bigger, they swallowed up my face. They were soft and black behind my glasses and I rolled them like planets. The beautiful eyes of an artist and an assassin. But I was sure to change much more profoundly after the massacre. I have seen pictures of beautiful girls, servants who kill and rob their mistresses. I have seen their photos before and after. *Before*, their faces sway like sensible flowers above their *piqué* collars. They breathe forth cleanliness and appetising honesty. The same discreet curling tongs has waved all their hair. And more reassuring than their collars, their waved hair and their look of being at the photographer's, is their sisterly resemblance, a right thinking likeness which at once puts in evidence the ties of blood and the natural roots of a family. *After*, their faces blaze like fire. They have the bare neck of people who are going to be beheaded, wrinkles everywhere, horrible wrinkles of fear and hate, folds and holes in their skin as if a beast with claws had gone over their faces and their eyes always big and fathomless like my own. They no longer look like each other. Each carries the memory of her common crime in her own way. If it is enough, I said to myself, for crime or chance to change these orphanage faces so much, what can I not hope for from a crime that has been entirely conceived and organised by myself. It would take possession of me, upsetting my all too human ugliness. A crime cuts in two the life of whoever commits it. There must be moments when one wants to go back, but it is there behind you, it bars your way, a glittering

mineral. I ask for only one hour to enjoy mine and feel its crushing weight. I will arrange everything to have this hour to myself. I decided to do the execution at the top of the Rue d'Odessa and to take advantage of a panic to fly leaving them to gather up their dead. I would run across the Boulevard Edgar-Quinet and turn rapidly into the Rue Delambre. I would only need thirty seconds to reach the door of the apartment where I live. At that moment my pursuers would be still in the Boulevard Edgar-Quinet, they would lose track of me and it would surely take them more than an hour to regain it. I would wait for them at home and when I heard them knock at the door I would reload my revolver and shoot myself through the mouth.

I stayed three days in my room without eating or sleeping. I had closed the shutters and did not dare to go to the window to let in light. On Monday someone rang at my door, I held my breath and waited. After a minute they rang again. I went on tip-toe to peep through the keyhole, but I only saw a bit of black cloth and a button. The fellow rang again and went away; I don't know who it was. During the night I had new visions of palm trees, running water and purple sky over a dome. I was not thirsty because every hour I had a drink out of the tap in the sink.

The day has come. I no longer felt hungry, I began to sweat, I soaked my shirt. It was sunny outside. Then I thought: "In a closed room shut up in the dark for three days he has neither eaten nor slept. Someone rang but he did not open the door. Quite soon he is going down to the street and he will kill." I frightened myself. At six o'clock in the evening I got hungry again. I was mad with rage. I knocked against the furniture, then I lit the electric light in the rooms and the kitchen. I began to sing at the top of my voice. I washed my hands and went out. It took two whole minutes to put all my letters into the box. I pushed them in in packets of ten, I must have crumpled some of the envelopes. Then I went along the Boulevard Montparnasse as far as the Rue d'Odessa. I stopped in front of a mirror in a shirt shop and when I saw my face I thought: "This is the evening." I took up my post at the end of the Rue d'Odessa not far from a lamppost and I waited. Two women passed by.

I looked the other way. At seven o'clock two groups, following each other closely, came out of the Boulevard Edgar-Quinet. There was a man and a woman with two children. Behind them came three old women. I took a step forward. The woman looked across and shook the little boy by the arm.

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The man said in a drawling voice: "That brat is a nuisance." My heart beat so hard that it hurt my arm. I advanced and stood motionless in front of them. My fingers were quite slack around the trigger.

"Excuse me," said the man pushing past me. I remembered then that I had shut my apartment door and that annoyed me: it would mean wasting precious time opening it. The people had passed on. I turned around and followed them mechanically, but I no longer wanted to shoot them. They got lost in the crowd on the boulevard. I leaned against the wall. I heard eight o'clock and nine o'clock strike. I repeated to myself: "Why is it necessary to kill these people who are *already dead*." And I wanted to laugh. A dog came and sniffed at my feet.

When the fat man passed me I jumped and dogged his footsteps. I saw the fold in his red neck. He waddled a bit and breathed heavily. I took out my revolver; it was shining and cold: it disgusted me so that I couldn't remember properly what to do with it. I looked from it to the fellow's red neck. The fold in his neck smiled at me like a smiling bitter mouth. I wondered if I was going to throw my revolver in the drain.

Suddenly the fellow turned around and looked at me irritably. I stepped back a step.

"I wanted to ask you." He did not seem to be listening. He looked at my hands. I wound up with difficulty: "Could you tell me where is the Rue de la Gaite?" His face was fat and his lips were trembling. He said nothing, he stretched out his hand. I backed again. "I wanted. . ." At this moment I knew I was going to howl. I did not want to. I fired three bullets into his stomach. He fell idiotically on his knees and his head rolled over on his left shoulder. "Swine," I said to him, "Dirty swine!" I fled. I heard him coughing. I also heard cries of people running behind me. Some were asking:

"What is it; are they fighting?" Then suddenly shouted:

"Murder, murder!"

I did not **think these** cries had anything to do with me. But they seemed to me sinister like the ringing of the fire brigade when I was a child. Sinister and slightly ridiculous. I ran at top speed.

Only I had made an unforgiveable error; instead of going along the Rue d'Odessa towards the Boulevard Edgar-Quinet I had gone back towards the Boulevard Montparnasse. When I noticed it it was too late; I was already right in the middle of a crowd, astonished faces were turned towards me (I remember an over-painted woman in a green hat with a feather) and I heard the idiots in the Rue d'Odessa crying "Murder" after me.

A hand was placed on my shoulder. Then I lost my head. I did not want to die stifled by this crowd, I fired two more shots. The people began to scream and drew back. I ran into a café. The customers got up at my entrance but did not try to stop me. I crossed the café's whole length and shut myself in the lavatory. There was still one bullet in my revolver. A moment passed, I was out of breath and panting. Everything was extraordinarily silent as if the people were deliberately keeping quiet. I lifted my weapon to eye level and saw its small black round hole, the bullet would come out from there; the gunpowder would burn my face. I let my arm drop and I waited. After a moment they came on stealthily, there must have been quite a lot of them judging by the shuffling of feet on the floor. They whispered a while and then were silent. I was still gasping and I thought they could hear me breathing on the other side of the partition. Someone came forward quickly and shook the handle of the door. He must have been flattened sideways against the wall to avoid my bullets. At the same time I wanted to shoot—but the last bullet was for myself. "What are they waiting for, I wondered. "If they threw themselves against the door and broke it down *at once* they would take me alive. But they were in no hurry, they left me plenty of leisure to die. The swine were afraid. After a moment a voice was raised: "Come on, open the door, no one will hurt you." There was a silence and the same voice went on: "You know very well you can't escape."

I did not answer, I was still puffing. To urge myself to shoot I said: "If they get me they will beat me, break my teeth, perhaps gouge out an eye." I would like to have known if the fat fellow was dead. Perhaps I had only wounded him and the other two bullets might not have hit anyone. They were up to something. They were dragging something heavy across the floor. I made haste to put my weapon in my mouth and bit it hard. But I couldn't fire or even put my finger on the trigger. All was silent again.

Then I threw away my revolver and opened the door for them.



ROY MCFADDEN

The Upland Field

I

Walking with the schoolmaster
About the Antrim countryside
—Pale, calm hills, remember me—
Wordfall linked to the loose stride,
I feel my town-tense thoughts revolve
To a serener pace, my dry
And over serious questions rest,
Like tilted oars; the scarf of sky
Wind round and bind me easily,
Claimed and named with hedge and field,
Ditch-flower and the stony lane,
Till I emerge, clipped clean and peeled
Of braincraze, heartmaze, dithering doubt
And vague throughother thought, and turn
With that dark ruminating man
To greet the dark hillfall and learn
Quiet truth from a grey form
Ambling home on bicycle
Or crunching cart to kitchen glow
In the day's wingfall. He'll fill
A notebook with close cautious words,
Conscious of the stylish hills,
The brows of Mourne framed in the pane:
And though he discounts miracles
And looks for prose in poetry,
I'm glad to walk this countryside
—Leafshot roads, remember me—
And have his speech or silence at my side.

II

The boots have marched far since the night
 I first sat down beside his fire
 In that book-crazy room; the maps
 Have fallen into trodden mire,
 And cities, pulled, tooth after tooth,
 Have left the brackish blood behind,
 And people, stripped of miracle,
 Beg on roadways with the blind.
 The boots have beaten into mire
 Much I counted permanent;
 Beaten the knowledge in my head
 With steel and blood for argument
 That only I and the known few
 Can struggle to the firmer ground.
 William Blake was wise when he
 Denied the world he knew was round.
 We must create a world or die
 In exile in an alien land.
 The honest man fights in the mire
 Without the help of voice or hand
 Except his own and those known few
 Companions along the way.
 The boots have beaten much I held
 Heartlong into shapeless clay
 Since that first night beside the fire
 In the book-crazy room, when death
 Was still a book-word and the wind
 From Europe carried flowers in its breath.

III

I know these people and dislike
 Much that I know: the loutish drums
 Breaking a summer evening:
 The tight fist and tight mouth: the slums
 Of bigotry, suburban cant:
 The stagnant ruts in the townland:
 These were my childhood. But this place,

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Land- and sky- and hill-shape, strand
And sea of cloud loose in the mind:
A moon-meshed bridge, a crying tram,
And roads as lively as my veins:
These things I love; for these I am.
Yet I'll not praise them, but insist
On finding answers to the clay,
A blind man fighting for firm ground
Who still believes he'll find a way
To the high field that has the sun
And holds its harvest in the hail.
So, walking with my friend to-night,
Within the threat of the hobnail
Boots of Europe, now I draw
These things around me, and those friends
Who've fought the gummy mouth of clay
And all that pays death's dividends
—Gravelocked ones, remember me—
For the wind about the hill
Carries voices that deny
That upland field we hope one day to till.

IV

Walking with the schoolmaster
About the crumbling countryside
—Sunshot hills, remember me—
Wordfall linked to the loose stride,
I feel my brain-caught thoughts revolve
To a serener pace, my dry
And too deliberate ways unfold
Like trees against a rain-purged sky.
I name my friends against the waste
Hastening from Europe, quick and dead
—Gravelocked ones, remember me—
And turn to earn my daily bread
Knowing that those protestants
Who fight the unrelenting mire
Shape an aristocracy,

And, fail or win, at least acquire
Shape and sense from shapelessness.
So, walking with the schoolmaster
And all those others by my side
I watch and measure. Look: the stir
Of branches in the hillside field
Beckons; silhouetted clear
Against the shapeless dying sun
The truthful rooted tree stands sheer
Against perplexity of time.
I watch and measure while the sky
Breaks in night—remember me,
White upland field—and the last bird slips by.

PATRICK KAVANAGH

The Gallivanting Poet

WRITING about F. R. Higgins is a problem—the problem of exploring a labyrinth that leads nowhere. There is also the problem of keeping oneself from accepting the fraudulent premises and invalid symbols established by the subject. The work of F. R. Higgins is based on an illusion—on a myth in which he pretended to believe.

The myth and illusion was "Ireland".

One must try to get some things straight about the man:

He was a Protestant.

He most desperately wanted to be what mystically, or poetically, does not exist, an "Irishman".

He wanted to be a droll, gallivanting "Irishman".

Nearly everything about Higgins would need to be put in inverted commas. All this was the essence of insincerity, for sincerity means giving all oneself to one's work, being absolutely real. For all his pleasant verse Higgins was a dabbler. It is not an easy thing being sincere; it takes courage, intelligence, and integrity. It is difficult to take seriously a man who could so consistently deceive himself.

The word "gallivanting" appears throughout his verse. The last thing you find in this Ireland is gallivanter. No doubt Synge made the gallivanter his theme, but for me Synge's characters and language are offensive and humbuggish. The quality in Synge which excites has nothing to do with Irish peasants, and it survives in spite of their silliness.

It is well known that the sure way of making ourselves incapable of true feeling is by pretending that we have it. A true lover doesn't have to pretend being in love; on the contrary he is always pretending that he isn't in love, hoping thereby to auto-suggest the pain away. So by Higgins and his Irishness.

Somebody writing recently in the press described Higgins as a "noble Protestant gentleman"—and I am not inclined to disagree about the final two words. The most valid aspect of the man was his Protestantism and, for all his gallivanting, his unIrishness.

In one of his poems he writes about what he calls "Flock

Mass," and throughout his work there are many allusions to Catholic ritual. If he were a really true poet he would not be always "making out and the door shut," as the saying goes; he would have written about a Protestant church and a Protestant service—and while it might not be as droll, it would have the merit of being sincere.

You get the same thing among Irish Protestant writers in general. It is not without point that the fathers of "Irish wit and humour" (more inverted commas) have nearly all been Protestants. They were trying to by-pass Rome on their way to the heart of Ireland.

You have Lover, Lever, Lynn Doyle, George A. Birmingham and many others, all true Protestants pretending to be "gay fellas." Some of them, such as Lover, had genius and that makes all the difference. We hear the genius and we are not in "Ireland" then but in the fairyland of poetry.

*A mother came when stars were paling
 Wailing round a lonely spring.
 Thus she cried while tears were falling
 Calling on the Fairy King.*

Their Protestantism has been a great tribulation to Irish writers of that persuasion. Alone of modern Irish writers Yeats got there merely by being himself, by being a sincere poet. He dug deep beneath the variegated surface to where the Spirit of Poetry is one with Truth. I say this with reservations, but none the less it is largely true. O'Casey turned Communist which is the real Protestantism of our time.

Another development of the Protestant writer's dilemma is to be found in his attempt to build up the idea of Dublin as a spiritual entity—the Dublin of Swift, Berkeley, Gogarty, Joyce, and "Larry-the-night-before-he-was-stretched." This was really gerrymandering the constituencies of the soul so as to segregate disagreeable elements and to provide one's own narrow outlook with a safe seat.

Most of us at one time or another have allowed ourselves to pretend that we believed in the *mystique* of the Nation or the City State. It is not an adult attitude though it can be amusing.

Higgins is full of this nonsense. His *Deuce of Jacks* has it for theme. A man of genius can focus on a narrow facet of the soul and yet suggest the complete picture of Mankind. Fools only see that he focussed on the narrow facet and they think that narrow facet the all-important. They say for instance: "Only a Dublinman can understand Joyce." But in so far as Joyce is a writer of genius the Dublin part of his work is of very superficial importance. Yeats wrote of names

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like Swift, Berkeley, Parnell, but in so far as he is a true poet these names could as validly have been Chinese.

It is not very easy to base a critical argument on the work of a man when it is so unreal, so unrelated to any values we know.

Even the man's name is doubtful. Somebody once told me that while travelling with Higgins in Meath the poet inquired of an old man regarding the great Irish family of the Higginses and the old man said: "The name wasn't Higgins, it was Huggins, and they were an English family." The whole point is that the name wouldn't have mattered a hoot—he could be called X Y Z—if he didn't himself think it mattered. And when he based his whole work on this heresy one can realise what a shadowy foundation and a shadowy building his achievement is.

He didn't dig.

He wrote one short play called the *Deuce of Jacks* and he wrote a couple of short stories, but when he died his principle achievement as a writer was the poems contained in his last collection, *The Gap of Brightness*.

Yet of these poems one can say very little. There is no direction in them. They give pleasure, but not the highest poetic pleasure, for the highest poetic pleasure consists in giving new direction to men's imaginations, in freeing new worlds for men. Growth, development, is true pleasure.

You get all this growth and development in Yeats. His own poems may not have the qualities of greatest endurance, but they have a vitalising effect on the reader. He makes poets of his readers as all genuine poems do.

The nearest thing to a really sincere utterance Higgins achieved is probably *Father and Son*.

*Only last week walking the hushed fields
Of our most lovely Meath, now thinned by November,
I came to where the road from Laracor leads
To the Boyne river—that seemed more lake than river—
Stretched in uneasy light and stripped of weeds.*

This is charming, but it lacks passion. Though he is writing about his father one feels that the poem is a composition rather than a spontaneous creation. You get this careful

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artificial construction in all his poems. Somewhere he writes of a cord "knotted over a parcelled earth." But I am afraid there is nothing in the parcel.

One of Higgins' best known poems is his lament for Padraic O'Conaire, also an interesting *composition*.

*They've paid the last respects in sad tobacco
And silent is this wakehouse in its haze,
They've paid the last respects and now their whiskey
Flings laughing words on mouths of prayer and praise.*

There is no impact in this. There is no urge behind it, and no grief. As poetry I must say that I get nothing out of it.

Looking through the poems I find everywhere the signs of the poet's false premises, his insincerity.

*When sap ebbed low and your green days were over
Hedging a gap to rugged land,
Bare-skinned and straight you were, and then I broke you
To champion my right hand.*

There is little vividness here, nothing to make us believe that Higgins felt the thorns of a living blackthorn bush. A good poet would not tell you about a blackthorn stick, he would *show* you the blackthorn. In fact this blackthorn is only a symbol of his phoney Ireland.

Just why Higgins' fake Ireland has devitalised his work may appear odd when one sees how a writer like Congreve can set the spirit dancing in an utterly fake society. Similarly with Ben Jonson and many others. The trouble is that Higgins was self-deceived by his fake world. These others rise on the wings of their fantasy above the earth where all things are born to die.

Sometimes Higgins, willy-nilly, releases the spirit of poetry from a background which has no social or national reality. It is not present in great abundance, but even a little of it is the stuff that endures. Perhaps the following is very like mere word-weaving, word-magic, but I think it is something more.

*O were I a wife with herds,
Found by the light of strange money:
One nursing a speckle of fields
On the mountain earth,*

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*They'd give me no sin of limb
To cleanse on a Garlic Sunday—
No scandal to sharpen my name
By gable or hearth.*

What this means on the plane of reason I do not know, but it gives me a curious sort of pleasure.

A similar sort of pleasure is to be found in that poem about Meath—

*Where soft grass gives the udders comeliness
Before late milking time in Meath or Carlow
Come MacNamara in whiskey let us bless
The pastured royalties of Tara.*

What is getting me down as I write these words is the futility of all this verse, its meaninglessness. We have reached a point where we cannot continue this pleasant dabbling. A poet must be going somewhere. He must be vitalising the spirit of man in some way. He must have dug deep beneath the poverty-stricken crust of our time and uncovered new veins of—uranium, the uranium of faith and hope, a transcendent purpose.

Now is the time for silent prayer and long fasting. Literature as we have known it has come to the end of its tether.

It can be said for Higgins that he wrote before the final disillusionment. In his day it was still possible to believe that pleasant dabbling in verse, word-weaving, white-magic, was enough.

And as I run through his poems again I find all the time the illusion of an illusion which means nothing to us. And instead of dwelling on the work of Higgins I find my mind wandering to the sincere voice of Auden, expressing the despair of his time.

*About suffering they were never wrong
The Old Masters; how well they understood
Its human position.*

This may seem a deviation from the subject, though I do

not think so. There you have the humility of our time, our pity.

By flinging ourselves prostrate before God and admitting our dire distress we may be admitted to a new dispensation. The best poets are those who lie prostrate before God. But poets like Higgins keep on pretending that the futile decoration on the walls is enough for the day.

Oh for the kick of Reality.

How the various verse-writers in this country can go on doodling and dabbling, unconscious of our real need, is to my mind pathetic. Chesterton made a remark which is applicable to them: "The trouble with our sages (poets) is not that they cannot see the answer; it is that they cannot see the riddle."

Higgins grew up in an Ireland which had only recently been invented. There were cheering revivalists (of what we now cannot say) and a general bedlam going on which gave everyone the notion that great spiritual activity was in the air. It was like the old charlatan Sequa who used to go around the country curing people of their rheumatism. The patient was brought into a tent where a band was blaring and there he was rubbed and shouted at till he forgot his pain. Home he went without his crutches only to find that the cold of the journey home had revived his rheumatism. That is what has happened to us. On the hysteria of nationalistic charlatanism we can shout away our pain no longer. We must dig. Many Irish writers came into being on the wings of this hysteria, but when the day of reckoning came they were found without a penny in their pockets, the pennies of experience.

*She genuflects; and our new priest
Looks—only to falter in the Mass;
Even the altar boy has ceased
And his responses, now, alas,
Are not "amen"—but towards the door
He seems to sigh: a stoir, a stoir.*

That is pure Protestantism posing as Catholicism. From no theological view but merely from the view of sincerity I find this from "Flock Mass" painful. Many Catholics have written about the Mass from the common worshipper's viewpoint, yet even when, like Joyce, they seemed blasphemous, or, like

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Carleton, comic, no one could doubt that they were writing from the inside. And that is the main difference between journalism and literature. The journalist tells you about something; the poet stands inside the thing and cries how it hurts him.

Again I search through these poems for something sharply felt, sharply visualised, something seen intimately, not generally, and I am being disappointed.

*O Hawks claw-clenched and bronze-plated
On your sun-splintered forts,
Brave winds be your perch to blaze on
The crows in our pastured slopes.*

I cannot see those hawks or those slopes. Everything is too general, not precise. He does not strike the note of a personal experience that is universal. He writes about what appears on the crust which he has not broken. No sap flows here.

In a word, Higgins did not experience vividly. One cry from the blood would be worth all this superficial stuff.

On a lower plain of criticism Higgins comes off well enough. But when I was young I read with something of enchantment things like—

*Now that the grey wet of the road makes quiet
Each step we take, ah, there can float
No stir on the air, but the stir of a cuckoo
Hopping its double note.*

Considering this one finds that it has vividness; the road comes alive in our imaginations. And it has magic, too, something that cannot be analysed, something that does free the imagination. Such moments are rare in Higgins, but the fact that they are there at all makes him worthy of serious consideration.

Personally, Higgins was like his verse. He carried the gallivanting pose into his ordinary life. He pronounced poetry "poertry" and drawled humorously. One gets weary of such posing and longs for the simple reality of a man. I hate being cruel to his memory, but I cannot get away from the thought that he never became adult and sincere.

He always had a joke for a companion. He always gave a

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man the pleasant answer. Perhaps I didn't know him well enough; there may have been depths of pathetic sincerity in the man which I missed. I never thought him a droll or gallivanting fellow for all his acting; and meeting an illusion always tired me.

He was to my cute, countrified way of thinking at the time a practical, slightly embittered person, one not particularly friendly to Catholicism—or to Ireland. He did love "Ireland" of course.

He wrote three other books besides *The Gap of Brightness*. They are *Island Blood*, *The Dark Breed*, and *Arable Holdings*. Poems from all three are to be found in the last collection. His play, *The Deuce of Jacks*, appeared in the *Dublin Magazine* but was not published in book form I think.

He was a poor man all his life. He began as a messenger boy. He worked in Brooks Thomas, Dublin, and organised a strike there—which at least showed an awareness of life. Afterwards he made a living by editing a trade journal, dull work surely. In the end he was made Manager of the Abbey Theatre. He was "educated in country schools" according to *Who's Who*, which probably means a national school education.

It may have been this background and this wearing existence that embittered him and made him clutch more tightly about the cloak that was his pose of the gay gallivanting Irishman.

He was influenced by Yeats and by Hyde's *Love Songs of Connaught*. If he had lived he might have dared to shed the cloak and give utterance to something small, maybe, but very real—himself.

NOTE: The editors suggest that my thesis gives the impression that I think a Protestant cannot be an Irish writer, and have asked if I would disclaim such a theory.

My immediate reaction would be: Who wants to be an Irish writer!

A man is what he is, and if there is some mystical quality in the Nation or the race it will ooze through his skin. Many Protestants, doubting that their Irishism would ooze, have put it on from the outside. National characteristics are superficial

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qualities and are not the stuff with which the poet deals. The subject matter of the poet is the Universal and in this he is one with Catholicism. By a peculiar paradox the pursuit of the Universal and fundamental produces the most exciting local colour as well. In desiring to be "Irish" a man is pursuing the non-essential local colour. "Seek first the Kingdom of God and its justice and all things will be added."

That Protestants can have the authentic local coloration is proved by such names as Standish O'Grady, Dunsany, O'Casey. But they didn't consciously desire this.



JOHN V. KELLEHER



Irish-American Literature, And Why There Isn't Any

THERE is an Irish family I know here in New England who had a granduncle who told the truth. His name was Dan and he was a hero, a genuine one, with four years of fighting in the American Civil War; and he was a sour, taciturn, grumpy old man, which in view of his truthfulness is what you might expect. One time one of his grandnephews—not a favourite, for he had none—got him talking about the Siege of Petersburg. “Uncle Dan,” he said, “you were at Petersburg, weren’t you?”

“The whole bloody nine months,” said Dan.

“Did the great mine explosion take place anywhere near your part of the front?”

“Right on my goddam front,” said Dan.

“What did it look like?”

“I don’t know,” said Dan, knocking out his pipe and going away for a rest. “I wasn’t there that day.”

Now, can you, gentle Irish reader, conceive of another Irish veteran of that war, who had been within six hundred miles of the scene, who would not have given his audience a complete and personalized picture of the explosion and what happened little Paddy Keefe when the land blew up?

No. Nor can I. For a long time now I have been trying to collect materials for the great Irish-American novel, a trilogy, of course, which would tell the whole three generation story from North Cork in 1847 or 1874 to Massachusetts in 1947. I have asked literally hundreds of people. And it is well I began asking young, for there are very few left now who experienced the early part of the history. Needless to say, everybody has been most co-operative. Everyone realizes that the story must be got down before it is forgotten altogether and the Irish-Americans lose the only cultural heritage that can distinguish them from any other kind of Americans. Needless to say, the amount of fact I have found in what I have gathered borders on the microscopic.

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If there were a few more Uncle Dans my hopes would be higher. Dan, it would seem, was a psychological sport, a unique eccentric, for I have met no other old Irishman or Irishwoman like him. They are not taciturn, Heaven knows, nor grumpy at all with the young people who want to hear what it was like. But they're Irish, and they tell stories. Everything comes out packaged in a story. And when you tear off the fictional wrapping, you are lucky indeed if you find a fact, or half a fact, inside. It isn't that the stories aren't good. Like all Irish stories they are very well-shaped, full of wit and sharply observed character, built around the one real folk theme, the victory of the hero through a sly and funny stratagem. But in them Uncle Mike or Daniel O'Connell or The-Man-Who-Kicked-The-Dentist-Through-The-Awning are all on the same level of reality, practically in the same moment of history. Take away the stratagem and you find that though the story has seemed all along to be about something you wanted to learn—say, the methods of the Castle Garden swindlers—it isn't about that at all.

I haven't heard anyone mention the Castle Garden swindlers for years. Like many another important detail in the unwritten history they have been forgotten, all but lost completely. Yet they gave many a man his first taste of America. Castle Garden, where they operated, was the old immigration depot in New York; and the swindlers were of many nationalities and were all equally mean. The old people always claimed that the Irish swindlers were the most successful and the meanest. Yet, except for an employment agency racket described in a novel written in the 1870's, I don't know how they worked, what line and bait they used, or how they won the confidence of the suspicious and frightened peasants. I really don't know anything about them except their significance. In the two stories I heard about them all the details had dropped away, leaving only an improbable yarn about how Cousin Mike or Uncle Joe swindled the swindler. The swindler himself had been reduced to a figure of fun, which he assuredly was not; and Cousin Mike swaggered across the scene "the boy well able to look after himself," which assuredly he was not. You can depend on it that if he met with a swindler, by the time Mike got to his relatives his pockets were as empty as his pride. If I could get that story, if I could have heard Mike tell it himself, honestly, I would have the start for the novel. The story as it exists doesn't mean a damn thing, except that an Irishman hates to admit he has been made a fool of. I knew that before I could talk.

My father used to tell me I would never get what I was looking for. What I needed was the talk in the kitchens at night, when the old country friends came visiting. "If you had the record of one night's talk, you'd have it all. But you wouldn't be able to understand most of it if you did have it." Why, I asked; and he tried to explain how different it was from anything I could have heard at anytime after I was old enough to take notice. "That talk vanished before the talkers. After the turn of the century it all died out; and especially after that you never heard them going off into Irish when they wanted to talk above the young folk's heads. Before . . ." But he couldn't tell me what it had been like before. It was as foreign to him as to me. Probably more, for the contrast between Irish in America and Irish-American was at its sharpest in his boyhood, when all the parent generation was immigrant and the children were Americans from birth. The tangle of emotions and cultures he remembered cannot be stated simply. It was a tangle and not a dichotomy. The parents were becoming Americans (or were to become Americans: the process is sometimes as instant as physical change of phase); and the children knew Ireland only through their parents' ageing and increasingly sentimental stories. I suspect, too, that the parents were jealous of their own experience. Assimilation to American life had been a rough, painful business for them, with little free choice about it, while the children saw it as little more than a schoolyard between Dirty Micks and Hungry Yanks. As a result, the older people clung to their belief that no one could understand the story who had not been through it. After the American change of phase, they could hardly understand it themselves.

The big change—it was really the end of the story—took place around the turn of the century: say, 1905, on the average: when these American-born, American-educated children took over from the parents. They walked easily into the sort of jobs their fathers could never have dreamed of. Family incomes, with three or four of the boys working at once, shot up from eight or ten dollars a week to sixty or eighty. It was the great victory, the realization for the Irish of the American dream, as later and much more swiftly the same dream came true for the Italians, the Poles, and a dozen other immigrant nationalities. The first result of it was that the Irish ghettos broke up. Today you will find in hardly any New England town a definite Irish quarter, though every town will have its memories of a "Patch," a "Kerry Acre," a "Roscommon Gap." At the same time Irish-American life lost its cohesion and its distinct character. The Irish began to disperse into the general

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American landscape: in a sense, to vanish. That process has gone a long way in the intervening forty years, less in New England than elsewhere because New England is a very small part of the United States and the Irish here are very numerous. Even here, however, the rate of amalgamation is high; and what any of us O's or Mac's can claim as truly Irish in his culture or his character is intangible and small. Old prejudices, old memories, and religion have operated to a fairly wide extent to keep the Irish apart from the Protestant Yankees, but these factors do not operate to prevent Irish-Lithuanian, Irish-Italian, Irish-Polish marriages, nor are the children of these marriages "Irish." Go outside New England and you will find the process gone immensely further towards completion. There is, at any rate, nothing to stop it.

The story, then, comes to its real end before 1910. Though there were plenty of families, after that, who had not yet made the grade or who were too freshly over to have gone through enough of the initiation, the results were assured, there was no suspense left. All the rest is epilogue—an epilogue that has less to do with Ireland, slow as we have been to realize it. The separation was proved in 1919, when the De Valera-Cohalan feud split the Irish-American societies wide open. Today there are only a few shadows of such societies left, and their influence is a shadow of those shadows. Yet the occasion of the blow-up was ridiculously petty compared to the turmoils and scandals the Clann-na-nGael and the other Irish Independence organizations survived between 1858 and 1919. It doesn't explain it, either, to say that the organizations broke up because their object had been achieved—the Irish are not as logical as that. They broke up because they were not held together any longer by outside pressure. Given that pressure—prejudice and discrimination; given the urge it engendered to strike back hard—at England, because England was the hereditary enemy, whereas America, though at the moment it might be Purgatory, held out the promise of a Heaven; add a lot of nostalgic sentiment, some knowledge and a hell of a lot of ignorance of Irish politics; and you have the mixture that gave those organizations their driving force, their mass, their cohesion. By 1919, though they hardly knew it, they were going on old inertia. For a while it was still possible to raise money for the Cause, but the Civil War in Ireland stopped that. Now try raising a couple of hundred thousand for a grand and Irish, if unspecified, cause. Patrick Ford's "Fenian Ram" submarine in Brooklyn Navy Yard is a monument to more than the crackpot revolutionism that thought it up. It is a

monument, the only monument, to the people who subscribed the money for it out of their meagre and uncertain pay, and to the emotions that made them subscribe. People and emotions both dead now, and forgotten.

In *Ireland To-day*, in 1936, Francis Hackett described certain "troglodyte" Irishmen you can, or could, still find here, "... so mummified that they seemed to me almost pre-historic. There are Irishmen driving taxi-cabs in New York who ought to be in the National Museum, like bog butter. How they do it, how they manage to feel and think and act and look like stub-ends of an extinct era is a social mystery . . . In immigrants like these there has been no new rooting, simply a persistence in folk-ways that a stubborn will has glazed over, at immense expense of spirit. Among the unemployed there are knobs and mounds of such discarded Irishmen. They could not adapt themselves, and once they leave the cluster around the historic Church their fate too often is to go to the bottom." Hackett is quite right, of course. But one must remember that once these troglodytes would have had something more than the Church to cluster around for understanding and help. Many a family here had at least one such non-adaptor: in my time he would be a silent old man who would say nothing because nobody could understand anything he had to say. If one could reconstruct the process by which he had passed, by what degrees one can only guess, from the role of strongest link with the home village to the inevitable high and dry loneliness among grandnephews and nieces who probably did not even know the name of the village, one would have the exact index of Irish-American history. Sixty years ago a man like that might be out of place in America, but he would not be lost in America. He would have the Fenian societies, the old A.O.H., probably a dozen friends on whom he could call in the evenings for comfortable discussions of the world of Ballybeyond. By the time I might have known him even Ballybeyond was worn out. The whole congenial immigrant society in which he had sheltered was vanished away. Whatever half-pitying attention he got from the sons of his friends would be given because they too were "Irish." He would know damn well that they weren't. Punkauns and pishogue Yankees, the whole lot of them. Till a year ago I would have passed off the old man's deprecation of us as crankiness. But he was right.

There are a lot of Irish short stories or novels about which I used to congratulate myself that I knew exactly what they meant, because I too was "Irish." I felt quite familiar with Ireland, before I saw Ireland. It was an illusion,

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of course, produced by the fact that I had heard stories at home in the same manner and the same dialect. What I forgot was that I had the stories third hand, from my father or mother who had them from older people. The stories—they were very like some of Frank O'Connor's in *Bones of Contention*—dated back to the 1860's or '70's when you could go from Cork City to any New England mill town without noticing the difference, if you squinched your eyes a bit and ignored the Yankees and the climate and anything that happened outside the "Patch." The town I was born in probably had the heaviest concentration of Cork and Kerry Irish in America, though by no means the largest. From the outside it might have seemed a cosmopolitan city—53 languages were recorded there in the 1920 census—but you know the Irish won't tolerate cosmopolitanism, and the Irish ran this place.

The mills were owned from New York. The top society, what there was of it, was Yankee. Politically, the Irish were in full control. They probably made up forty per cent of the 100,000 population, and were so closely interallied that their ranks were never broken, though they were, to put it mildly, not loved by their colonials, the Wops, Turks, Frogs, Polacks, Squareheads, and other tolerated races. (There was one time the French Canadians voted *en masse* for a man named Rochefort, and then found he was from Cork!). My father used to say that the whole town was made up of Millstreet men married to Dingle women. He meant the whole of the town that mattered. At least half of the family relationships—we counted up to third cousin and if necessary allowed one or two removals—dated from the 1830's in Cork or Kerry and were uninjured by the trip across the Atlantic. In my childhood I used to hear Fermoy Irish spoken, which I'll bet few of my Fermoy contemporaries have heard. Millstreet or Dingle Irish was easy to find. The prize Irish, I was told, was from where "you could shpfit across the Blackwater." I heard that Irish too, for the man who told me had "often shpfit that shpfit."

Now, if anyone under sixty ought to be able to write the great Irish-American novel, assuming of course enough knowledge of grammar to put the words in order, I, or any townsman of mine, ought to be able to. But I can't, as I have explained, for the reasons I have explained. I still thought I could till I went to Ireland and got up to C——, our family village in North Cork.

I had come to find one thing: if anyone remembered my great-grandfather who had stayed in C—— when the rest of the family emigrated, and who died there about 1880. It was

disappointingly plain that no one did. On the other hand, the investigation was not to be abandoned for such a small failing as that. I produced genealogical evidences enough to satisfy a College of Heralds. I named the farm we had had, detailed our relationships with the other numerous families of the area, and sat back to hear the conclusions. For a couple of hours all went very well. The farm was well known and was a respectable one. The relationships had an authentic timbre. Nobody questioned my grandfather's account of who and what we were. I felt as if I were at home, playing the game of "Tommy O'Donovan; which Tommy O'Donovan?; The Custer Street O'Donovans; which Custer Street O'Donovans—there's two." It was a damn nice feeling. Two thousand miles and eighty years seemed the merest mist between us. The Irish are the same the world over, I was saying to myself, when the blow fell.

One of the men sensed a flaw in the evidence. "Where did your great-grandfather marry?" he asked me.

"In B——," I said. "He and his brother married two sisters, O'Mahonys, from there." I felt pretty proud of that bit of information. It brought the story back to 1832, and I could take it a step farther.

There was a strange silence. Something, plainly, had gone wrong. With a cute smile he leaned forward again. "What did they go so far out of the parish as that for, to marry? B—— is fifteen miles and more north of here."

"I know," I said. And added innocently, "What's fifteen miles?"

Fifteen miles, it turned out, was a lot. It was too far by a great deal; and it meant that there was something fishy about all the claims I had advanced on behalf of my forbears. The discussion around me became very animated, though there was a polite attempt to avoid putting the charges into definite words till they seemed proved. There were hidden reasons, however, and they had to be found.

They were found. The inquisitor challenged me with the general opinion. "They were herdsman," he said. "They were wandering up and down the country tending other people's herds; and that's how they took girls from so far out."

Shocked, I protested. "They had the farm at P——. They weren't herdsman. My grandfather never said so."

"He wouldn't say so. It was their father had the farm—and they were herdsman. That's how they did it."

"It," whether they did it or not, ruined my social standing in C——, and ruined it finally. I was pretty sore about it at

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the time. Not angry with the men of C——, who were, if anything, more kindly courteous after the dreadful decision than before, but damned angry at the assumption that eighty years of pride and honest respectability and firm Irishry in exile weighed nothing beside the possibility of a social error in 1832.

Afterwards, in a less injured mood, it occurred to me that very likely this was what my father had meant when he said, I would not have understood the talk of his parents' old friends. There must often have been very similar judgments passed in New England kitchens, in the '70's and '80's, when the local Irish Who's Who was being gone over. He had, to be sure, told me the strange case of the old lady who objected to her son's fiancée because her own (the old lady's) father had been a leaseholder, while the girl's grandfather had been a cottier "with two rocky rack-rented acres and one cow." That the girl's family had become more prosperous in America than her own made no difference; good blood was good blood, caste was caste. I don't suppose the old lady really expected her objection to be understood or accepted. Certainly her son would not have seen the point. He knew that his mother and his mother-in-law had worked side by side in the mills. And now to have the social grading system of rural Ireland offered him as a standard for choosing a wife!

What American could invent that sort of thing? If our hypothetical Irish-American author (me?) has to breathe his early characters to life by informing them with such attitudes and judgments as those, I'm afraid he is stuck. And all the Irish history, sociology, and anthropology in the world won't unstick him. The great book, you understand, ought to be a novel, a real one, and not one of those undisguised sociological tracts, multiple case-histories, that are passed off on us as "serious" literature "with a purpose." Maybe the business could be inverted, and the book be written by an observant Irish farmer who would stoke up on American history and sociology. Any offers?

Well, let us look at some writers who have made gestures this way. We will begin with John McElgun, of whom you have no doubt heard.

If opportunities made an artist, John McElgun, author of *Annie Reilly or the Fortunes of an Irish Girl in New York* (New York: J. A. McGee, 1878), 245 pp., would be the bright star and eminence of Irish-American letters. Mr. McElgun's style leaves us something to desire—he seems to have quarried his language with a pick-axe; and his thought sometimes has the consecutive direction of a Mexican jumping bean, sometimes

not. Nevertheless, very plainly he knew what he was writing about. Time and again, he gives us a chunk of realism: his is the picture of the employment agency swindler I mentioned earlier. He knew Ireland; he knew Queenstown and Liverpool and the passage agencies; he knew what the immigrant ships were like, what the Irish boarding houses in New York were like, what happened to the Irish who fell away from the Church. All these things he mentions. Sometimes he describes them; and when he does you want to reach out your foot across sixty-nine years and kick him solidly in the pants. Because Mr. McElgun is a snob, and a double snob, true and inverted. He knows that the Irish of his time have the virtues of health, strength, sound morals, and the true religion. He says so constantly, in at least two different ways. At the same time he is ashamed because they do not also have the virtues of money, gentle breeding, secure social position, and money. Writing for God knows what expected audience, he tries to show that the Irish really have all these latter virtues, or ought by rights to have them, or soon will have them, and really, after all, don't need to have them because they have them anyway, and are just as well off without them. He cannot admit any Irish social failing, except, of course, in the case of some thick Mick who is not representative of the race and who has been seduced by the easy life of the Pennsylvania oil fields. Still, there is a lot of honesty in this author. (If there were more, his book would be an invaluable document today). He keeps at least two toes on the ground, which sometimes gives him an incongruously equivocal air, balanced as he is on pride and shame. In the Irish boarding house, for instance, where the guests sleep three and four in a bed, "All the floors were bare but clean, except where covered with tobacco-juice and the ashes of pipes." You see, he can't admit that such Irish dosses were ever dirty: yet he has to note the dirt. There is a touch of the artist about old McElgun. Which is a hell of a lot more than you can say for the refined journalists and grocer's educated daughters who crashed the "Household Book of Irish Verse" and other such seven pound proofs of Irish-American culture with superior steel engravings.

McElgun romanced crudely about the facts. The journalists and the daughters wrote dishwatery appeals to Owen Roe and Red Hugh, charging them with ousting the Saxon slaves and tyrants before it was too late. McElgun had a lot of honest Irish xenophobia; he admired the Yankees, but immigrants other than Irish, particularly the "smelly Germans," he cari-

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captured crudely and cruelly. The Household Book set, thirsting for gentility, imitated Yankee schoolmarm poetasters with poetasteless odes and triolets to Pere Marquette, the Lesser Common Song Sparrow, and the falling snow. McElgun tells us plenty, mainly because he shows himself so plainly. They only tell us why the struggling poorer Irish wrote off the lace-curtain Irish of that time as a dead loss. The trouble is that there are only a few McElguns to hundreds of the others. It is not, you see, because the Irish weren't literate that we have no Irish-American literature. It is because they wrote tripe. And not real tripe, either, like McElgun's—but imitation tripe.

There are two other writers to be considered, both very substantial. Finley Peter Dunne who wrote the Mr. Dooley essays, and James T. Farrell, author of the Studs Lonigan trilogy and the semi-autobiographical Danny O'Neill novels, "A World I Never Made," etc. Neither fits the bill.

Dunne's Mr. Dooley is, I think, the greatest humorous character in American literature, and the wisest and most enduring. And the lesser characters, Hennessey who draws Dooley out, and Hogan and Dock O'Leary and Father Kelly whom he makes his examples of the world, are uncannily real, too. But the primary concern of the essays is philosophic, to draw the universal from the topical by stingingly moral wit. The details of Dooley's life and neighbourhood are put in only as incidental background and very stingily. If the novel I desire is ever written, the novelist will inevitably incur a tremendous debt to Dunne who recorded the speech of the immigrant generation, and who preserved half a dozen of its characters, so soundly conceived you can ring them true against any criterion. But the Dooley essays are a long way from fulfilling the rounder purposes of imaginative fiction.

Farrell, like Dunne, a Chicago man, writes of the period after the First World War, so he never comes near what I believe the essential beginning. There is no distinctive Irish-American life or thought left for him to describe. His novels are American novels with many Irish-American characters.

The significance of his work lies in his description and knowledge of the void into which whole myriads of our people have fallen, that modern, lower middle class, traditionless, urban void underlying industrially revolutionized society in Chicago, Liverpool, Paris, Milan, Dublin. The void has no national boundaries. The people in it have no essential nationality but modern barbarism. If it happens that the specimens Farrell examines are Irish-American Catholics, they could as easily be Polish-American, Italian-American, Czech-American, German-

American, without his making any fundamental changes. Nor would it require a basic rewriting to set the novel outside America altogether. *Studs Lonigan*, Farrell's trilogy, can be studied with profit by any politician or priest anywhere who feels that his particular institution has faced up to its responsibilities. Studs is "Irish," "Catholic," "American": these at any rate are his party labels. You know him personally, whatever your party labels are. Studs and his limbo are everywhere. Unless we fill that void with something better than propaganda, Hollywood, and defunct nationalism, we will fall into it with him, amid a universal collapse.

Again our hypothetical author must incur a debt to Chicago, for he cannot finish his story without indicating that many, many Irish families, once they broke out of the Irish slum, fell promptly into Farrell's void. They fell into it nearly naked of tradition. They neither kept their Irish traditions, which no longer seemed relevant, nor discovered the important American ones. If they carried the Church with them, as too often they did, it was to the detriment of the Church and a proof of the clergy's failure. That, of course, is not the whole epilogue to the great change of phase around 1905. Unfortunately it is too much of the epilogue. We can all examine our consciences for the fault.

I might say that the beginning of the novel is relatively easy. The story from the Famine exodus to the end of the American Civil War is given in vivid detail, splendidly composed, in Oscar Handlin's *Boston's Immigrants: 1775-1865*. The Irish regimental histories, crude as they are, give us a great deal more. It is what happened to the returned Irish veteran that stumps me. Uncle Dan at the siege of Petersburg in 1864, in a regiment harmoniously made up of the survivors of Yankee and Irish outfits, can be revived as a living man. But what Dan did or thought or said or hoped, in 1870, in a mill town slum, I don't know and find hard to imagine. I hope sometime I shall know. I hope someone gets beyond the second chapter, before it is too late.



ROBERT GREACEN

The Two Voices

(i)

TOGETHER with the findings of Freud and Jung in psychoanalysis, the greatest influences on modern intellectuals have been the researches of Karl Marx on the one hand and the rationalisation of Nationalist theory on the other. There does not appear to be any work in which their twentieth century history—especially in their effect on literature and art—has been comprehensively treated; yet here is surely a great field awaiting exploration.

Many intellectuals who reject the Marxist superstructure of philosophy—and the belief in political inevitability which it embodies—have been profoundly influenced by the Marxian analysis. For older theories of history, principally those based on religious teaching, Marx substituted, and by so doing oversimplified, an economic and materialist concept of class-struggle. But, just as the preponderantly greater part of the iceberg is buried, so, until the advent of Marx, there lay hidden the now widely accepted idea that, since ancient times, civilisation has rested on a basis of exploited labour and that the proletariat thus exploited has replied by a declaration of war, largely unconscious, against the ruling-class. Further, Marx argued, the proletariat must eventually move, if necessary by revolution, into the ruling-class position, so that eventually society in its entirety may be termed a proletariat.

Artists and intellectuals are indebted for the clear-cut exposition of a theory that has already led to the establishment of what is claimed to be "proletarian" rule in one vast piece of world territory: and it is irrelevant that only few can swallow the Marxist gospel whole. Modern non-Communist Socialism is more indebted to Marx and Engels than it would care to admit; and though Social Democrats have often warred with the Marxists, yet the two kinds of Socialism acknowledge the same enemies in capitalism and traditional militarist rule. One might say that they are divided in the manner Christianity is split into roughly two irreconcilable sections, Roman Catholic

and Protestant, both of which acknowledge the supremacy of the same God and the same Jesus Christ.

The other influence, Nationalism, has to some extent accompanied the growth of both forms of Socialism. The unification movements of Germany and Italy respectively were two of the chief examples of the principle in the nineteenth century. This concept, in our own period, has chiefly animated the formerly subject peoples of Asia—Hindus and Moslems alike in India, the Burmese, the Indonesians. Of course Nationalism has been a driving force in history earlier than the nineteenth century; but not until then was it shaped into a coherent and reasonable philosophy that could and did work as a kind of yeast in the nations that most adopted it. The credit must go in large measure to the Italian patriot, Mazzini.

These influences, then, have made an impress on European art that could hardly be exaggerated. Artists everywhere, but in particular those for whom the religious pattern came to have less and less acceptable meaning, have turned to the new faiths, faiths which appeared to them positive and dynamic. Art abhors an intellectual vacuum.

(ii)

At this point it may be valuable to take a concrete case, to glance at that vast, sprawling land-mass most of us still persist in calling "Russia," despite the several distinct nations within the Soviet Union. In a way the U.S.S.R. should have a special significance for Irish people, since it burst into revolution just one year after the Irish Rising. And Lenin, one should remember, was well-acquainted with the various phases of the Irish struggle and with the pioneering work of the Socialist Republican, James Connolly.

The Soviet Union has, to this date, been the only considerable territory to adopt a Socialist economy (even the Soviet Communists would not pretend that the Union has a *Communist* structure): it so happened, for a variety of good historical reasons, that the forces of Marxist Socialism were successful in defeating the moderate Menshevik party. Now it is too often assumed—and not only by the under-educated—that what has happened in the Soviet Union is exactly what would happen in other countries if Marxism (or Social Democracy, for that matter, some say) should win the day. But one cannot too much stress that Czarist Russia of 1917 was still quasi-medieval in organisation, with an undeveloped agriculture, an almost non-existent industrial potential, masses of illiterate peasantry.

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The society in the Soviet nations to-day, apart from individual *national* differences, must necessarily be very different to what French or German or British Communism would have become, despite the fact of agreement by all of them on fundamental concepts. Thus, when one bears in mind these basic differences between Asiatic, non-Westernised culture and that of our own side of the Iron Curtain, the attitude of Soviet officialdom to cultural activities is not so surprising. But we should reserve final judgment, not being in possession of all the facts. Everyone knows the names of Alexander Blok and Alexis Tolstoi and Sholokhov in literature, of Prokofiev in music and of Pudovkin and Eisenstein in the film, to name only the internationally outstanding figures in modern Soviet culture. There are hosts of others, of course, of whose work we cannot readily know, for obvious reasons. Yet many independent observers have remarked on the strength and depth of Soviet achievement in the cultural field—of ballet and Shakespeare for everyman.

It would be foolish to suppose, despite the great strides in combating illiteracy and in bringing the fine arts within the compass of the worker, that all is well for writers and artists of the U.S.S.R. As long ago as 1914 Maurice Baring, an authority on Russian literature, wrote:

The didactic stamp which Bielinsky gave to Russian aesthetic and literary criticism has remained on it ever since, and differentiates it from the literary and aesthetic criticisms of the rest of Europe, not only from that school of criticism which wrote and writes exclusively under the banner of 'Art for Art's Sake,' but also from those Western critics who championed the importance of moral ideas in literature, just as ardently as he did himself.

In *Russia: The New Purge*, which Mr. Edward Crankshaw wrote in *The Observer* (August 24, 1947), there is a very recent confirmation of the view that has come to be held by even the most liberal and sympathetic foreign correspondents in the Soviet Union to-day. Mr. Crankshaw writes:—

If anyone still has any doubts about the reality of the Russian withdrawal from the West, or about the exclusiveness of Soviet Marxism, a short course of reading in the Moscow Press would soon convince him.

The most prominent non-Russian casualty so far has been Picasso, who thus achieves the double distinction of excommunication by both the Nazi Goebbels and the Red Alexandrov. "The pure air of Soviet art" *Pravda* observes with unction, "remains in danger of pollution from epidemics of the putrescent bourgeois decadent art of the

West . . . The existence in our country of a school representing the admirers of bourgeois decadent art, who acknowledge the spiritual paternity of the French formalists, Picasso and Matisse, and the 'Knave of Diamonds' cubists of pre-revolutionary Russia, cannot be tolerated side by side with the art of Socialist Realism (sic)". So Picasso's *Guernica* has to go, and Soviet artists are to model themselves on those masters—one can never remember to ask their names—who paint the mass-produced pictures of Lenin and Stalin

The U.S.S.R. Academy of Arts (how all "Academies" are at one in their abhorrence of the "moderns"!) aims at basing Soviet art on a correct ideological basis, by fostering "the struggle against formalism, naturalism and other contemporary manipulations of bourgeois art." That such a struggle is considered necessary and that Soviet authorities harp on the topic show the degree to which the intelligentsia and artists have been re-influenced by Western culture. It is ironic that not only the reactionary cultural forces everywhere, but even Mr. Truman himself (to judge from his utterances on the plain-man-who-knows-what-he-likes level), are receiving support in their battle against "unintelligibility" and "decadence" from such an unexpected and embarrassing quarter.

If painting which reveals "decadent" trends is to be proscribed, how much more bitter must be the campaign against literature, which, even at its most obscure, exercises a far more direct influence on the public mind than do the plastic and graphic arts. A series of attacks by the Central Committee of the Communist Party on two Leningrad magazines, guilty of cultural aberration, were published in English, with editorial comment, in *Horizon*, October, 1946. Cyril Connolly summed up an intricate situation—with which I have not space to deal—thus:—

What is this verdict in Western terms? It is as if the magazines *Horizon* and *New Writing* . . . were suspended; one suppressed, the other given a new editor, and our composite writers, Waugh-Gubbins, and Woolf-Sitwell publicly censured, forbidden to publish another line (i.e. condemned to starve). Pasternak-Eliot is also involved and elsewhere reprimanded and Spender-Tikhonov retired from his high function.

The lessons to be learnt from this new and barbarously vigorous attack on Western culture are simply these—that the U.S.S.R. still feels desperately afraid of the non-Soviet world, which on two occasions has engaged her in War; that all the

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iron curtains ever manufactured will not prevent the exchange, even to a limited extent, of artistic methods and ideas; that the artist must necessarily be insecure, even when he is ostensibly "protected" and "honoured." The artist, says universal Authority, is dangerous, anarchic, an unreliable fellow, who must be clapped into a straight-jacket for his own good, as well as for the "security" of the nation.

There were high hopes once that in the new Socialist society non-conformity would not be synonymous with treason. Too much was expected of Sovietism just as the English Romantics expected a new Heaven and a new Earth to issue from the French Revolution. Yet no one can deny that the dates 1789 and 1917 were pivots in the history of the modern world, and that the two Revolutions were largely inspired by the prototypes of intellectuals some of whom were later repudiated.

(iii)

Most nationalist movements have two wings, one of them constitutional, conservative, safe—the other violent, revolutionary, impulsive. Ireland was no exception. These parallel tendencies tended to alternate; one or other was always solo in the foreground, playing against the murmuring tide of a hidden orchestra. Fenianism and Sinn Féin and the Irish Republican Brotherhood were at one in method: Daniel O'Connell and the Young Irelanders hoped for freedom without violence, though Fintan Lawlor was in some measure an early Socialist.

In 1916 the dominant impulse in the advance-guard of nationalist feeling was for action: swift, certain and irrevocable action. Thus the first sentence of the declaration of the Irish Republic, before even the formal assertion of national rights, reads:—

In the name of God and of the dead generations from which she receives her old tradition of nationhood, Ireland, through us, summons her children to her flag and strikes for freedom.

Yet in this blow for freedom, decisive though its eventual outcome, the small band of revolutionaries stood alone, cut off from the main mass of the population. Full sympathy with their aims came only with the executions.

Padraic Pearse, James Connolly and Yeats are the representative figures, now becoming legendary. Pearse was a "romantic," an idealist obsessed with the traditional concept of Cathleen Ni Houlihain, ardent in the cause of progressive

education. Connolly, the pugnacious realist, aimed at a socialised economy, realising social vision through the bright fire of intellect. Since Connolly and Pearse were executed, their future development can only be guessed at. But it is probable that those sections of which they were the respective leaders could not have been soldered together after the freedom of the country was generally recognised. Yeats is the third symbol: he could think, on great occasions, in terms of action as, more comfortably perhaps, in terms of fairyland and magic and Madame Blavatsky. He lived to become a Senator, combining drains and dreams. Thus Pearse, the patriot artist, could not readily see beyond the harp; Connolly, the pure revolutionary of the sickle knew how to "work illegally, go hungry, be anonymous"; Yeats, the pure artist, had too intensely personal a genius to cast in his lot with either harp or sickle in any exclusive sense, nor was he impelled by tradition to make a choice, as so many Irishmen are:—

. . . I declare
*They shall inherit my pride,
 The pride of people that were
 Bound neither to Cause nor to State,
 Neither to slaves that were spat on,
 Nor to tyrants that spat,
 The people of Burke and Grattan . . .*

On the other side of the Irish Sea George Bernard Shaw fought the battle of canny, anglicised George versus the wild Hibernian Bernard. It was Bernard who directed all the outrageous actions of his master and George who preserved them untainted by personal offence or spitefulness; Bernard wrote the rare passages of somewhat arid lyricism in Shaw's plays, but it was George who joined the Fabian Society, upturned the applecarts and gave us the *Intelligent Woman's Guide*. Shaw began his career and formed his opinions at a time when the Marxist dynamic was at a low ebb. Besides, for all the blustering, anti-English swagger, he matured within the English tradition of reasonable progressiveness and constitutional compromise. It could be argued that there is nothing European in Shaw's thought. Economics drove Shaw out of Ireland, though to some extent politics has brought him back in spirit: he lost touch with the tradition of the harp, though indeed he would most likely have shocked himself and others out of the patriotic mists had he remained. But this Shavian rejection is different in kind from the Yeatsian renunciation; the one driven by

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cerebral fervour, the other by romantic (though intellectualised) frenzy.

The Civil War which ended in April, 1923, had been far more bitter than the 1916-21 struggle against the common enemy, and its wounds are still with us. As in all Civil Wars the normal restraints fell off, with disastrous results. There is never mercy between former comrades-in-arms who fall out. Many people still in the prime of life know how the gunman reigned supreme during those years of open terror: and Seán O'Casey's first play was significantly titled *The Shadow of the Gunman*. O'Casey did not doubt where he stood, being a firm socialist republican who happened also to be an artist of genius. He accepted the fact of the revolutionary drama that must be played out, yet he saw the pity of it and his own experiences left him in no doubt of the empty bellies in Dublin's slums, whoever ruled Ireland. The first O'Casey cycle culminated in *The Plough and the Stars* which went backwards in time to the Easter Rising. A great time had produced, in its aftermath, a great dramatist who, despite his critics' advice, has continued boldly to experiment in his medium.

The past couple of decades in Ireland have been concerned with the process of settling-down, with the repair of ravages, physical and economic. We all know how factories have been started, how the Shannon has been pressed into the provision of cheap electric power, how afforestation and a hundred other Government-sponsored enterprises have been put in hand. But a period when the old tensions are breaking up and when a new national system is being established is not the most fertilising for literature. At such a time history lays a clammy hand on the imaginative spirit and business men come out into the open. A new industrialist and large-shop-owning class has arisen: money is power.

After the early 'Twenties, another exponent of the sickle left Ireland in disgust. Liam O'Flaherty had strong, impetuous blood in him and would not stay where he considered the Revolution had been strangled by miles of Civil Service green tape. It may be that he—and others like him—lacked political realism, that they unjustly blamed the new Irish leaders for not pursuing a policy in strong contrast with their entire politico-religious background. O'Flaherty is perhaps at his most trenchant and is most directly political in his *Life of Tim Healy*, a biography full of gusto and rhodomontade. He tends to spoil his case by over-statement. More lately, in work which includes his novel *Famine* there has been a welcome return to native sources.

These three younger novelists may for convenience be grouped together: Peadar O'Donnell, Frank O'Connor and Seán O'Faolain. O'Donnell is a socialist who writes of his own folk on the Donegal seaboard and an authority on emigration, that special catastrophe of modern Ireland. Like O'Connor and O'Faolain his background of vivid political struggle has helped him fully to understand and interpret the life of the peasantry; and his outlook is truly international. Frank O'Connor seems happiest when attacking—especially in his later work—the gombeen-man, the tyrannical priest and the rather forlorn timidity of the little, abandoned Irish villages where the stream of life seems, superficially at any rate, to have gone dry. Progressive in alignment but (like O'Connor) non-socialist, Seán O'Faolain has tended to veer away from novel and short-story to biography and politico-social journalism: in editing *The Bell* for some years he has held up, as his chief whipping-boys, Censorship and the obscurantism of the extremist devotees of the Gaelic League. As do nearly all Irish Roman Catholic writers, O'Faolain pleads for a *mystique* freed from petty bigotry and based on the socially conscious philosophers of European standing such as Maritain and Benedetto Croce.

The poets in Ireland, over the past fifteen years, have either inherited consciously from the Gaelic mode, as Austin Clarke and Roibeard O'Farachain have done, or stood outside it altogether, writing poetry not distinguishably *Irish* at all. There has been little experimental work, probably because there is practically no public for it—not surprising in a country still lacking a numerically-strong, leisured middle-class. Both schools have attempted to write “pure” poetry, free from any suspicion of ideological “taint.”

From among the poets one clear voice has come from Irish rural life—that of Patrick Kavanagh. Particularly in his long poem, *The Great Hunger*, Kavanagh has spoken for the inarticulate peasant-farmers, who, after all, constitute the most numerous class in the country. This poem explores the frustration of a typical small farmer—a frustration, principally sexual, rooted in the historical and economic situation, which may be clearly viewed in the Vital Statistics of fewer marriages and more marriages at higher age-levels. *The Great Hunger* has moments of lyrical intensity; it has passages which show the mounting apathy which would appear to be devitalising country life. The peasant possessiveness of old age, the desperate clinging to a couple of scrawny acres is stressed in such lines as these:—

Maguire was faithful unto death:

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*He stayed with his mother till she died
At the age of ninety-one.
She stayed too long,
Wife and mother in one.
When she died
The knuckle-bones were cutting the skin of her son's
backside
And he was sixty-five.*

The Great Hunger is important both as poetry and as a social document; while its author has never publicly allied himself politically, his most poignant work is charged with revolt against the influences that would stultify the countryside.

Within the past seven or eight years there has been a gradual move towards integrated expression—an expression which is Irish but not parochial or provincial. It is curious, too, that some of the manifestations of this supra-nationalism (internationalism is too strong a word) come from the North, as I have pointed out in my essay in *Irish Writing No. 2*. The seeds beneath the snow of provincial self-satisfaction have developed unobtrusively. The Ulster writer has usually had three choices—to go to Dublin, to leave for London, to stay at home and become more and more pushed into his own ego, exploring the secret recesses of the mind where politics and the actualities of life cannot enter. Three examples at random, from the older generation, Rutherford Mayne, St. John Ervine and Forrest Reid, will illustrate.

It is in this atmosphere that Michael McLaverty has delved into the deep subconscious of the Catholic Nationalists, especially of those who have drifted into red-brick, nondescript, late-Victorianised Belfast from the agricultural hinterlands of Bann and Lagan. In his writing there is a blending of the social and personal into lyrical commentary on the life around him. The politics of McLaverty's work are not near the surface, yet they are shown both in affirmation of Nationalism and in emphasis on the need for a just social pattern where mean streets and dour workhouse wards no longer exist.

Writers, both from North and South, are coming forward, just old enough to have felt the political backwash of the "political" creative ferment of the 'Thirties in England, of Red Sundays, unemployed mass-meetings, the clamour towards the Popular Front. They are disillusioned on all sides and the Ivory Tower, with or without H-and-C laid-on, has as little attraction as the political platform. If they set store on any one quality it is on personal integrity. Write about what you

feel and think and know as honestly as you can and with as little jargon as possible: that more or less sums up their clichés. The new Irish writers, for their part, seek neither to tune in their assumption of an organised cultural climate, however necessary for them to reject the grosser critical clichés. The new Irish writers, for their part, seek nither to deny nor accept harp or sickle or hammer; they are not sufficiently naïve to be able to work to any single symbol. That they should have a greater awareness both of the stream of political history and of recent developments in world literature is essential, if their work is not to be pock-marked by provincial attitudes. Regionalism is as desirable as provinciality is undesirable.

The world has contracted into one physical unit, yet it is ideologically divided as never before—and aided in division by the modern media of film and radio—into water-tight political spheres. The only hope for Irish art and literature is that her young artists and writers should have the courage not to be dismayed by the Babel of false prophets. That they must study for themselves the principles of Nationalism and of Socialism, both in their essences and in their results, if they would write out of an informed background, cannot be disputed.



BOOK REVIEW



LIFE AND THE DREAM by Mary Colum.—(*Macmillan & Co.*, 15/-).

TO describe this brilliant and abounding book as an autobiography would only be a quarter truth. Its narrative follows the course of the writer's life from childhood to the present day, but her interest—so intense as to be self-forgetful—is all for the scenes passed and the people met on the way. A diverse journey it is truly: from the countryside in north-western Ireland to convent-school life here and abroad, thence to Dublin in the brilliant revival days, and on again to the United States, Hawaii, Ireland revisited and Paris. Let it not be thought, however, that *Life and the Dream* is merely a book of memoirs. If these are memoirs they are so in no ordinary sense of the word. Mary Colum's account of her literary life in Europe and America is never less than experience—the experience of a wise and responsive nature, and her book possesses an imaginative wholeness that gives it place beside George Moore's *Hail and Farewell*. Like Moore she is an acute observer with an uncanny memory; but there the comparison ends, for she has no cruelty and all too little egotism. In portraying, as Mrs Colum does, the main figures of the Irish literary renaissance, Moore gives the impression of watching tigerishly for the Achilles heel; Mrs Colum is more responsive to the heroic stature. She has at the same time a lively and very feminine sense of humour, so that one is sometimes reminded of Yeats's description of her in the early nineteen hundreds as his "ideal of a youthful nihilist." It is this young person who so mischievously takes Lady Gregory to pieces, but then the mature critic steps in and quietly, beautifully puts her together again.

Of Yeats—"by many, many degrees the most remarkable person I have ever known"—she writes memorably and at length. And in these pages we see the poet in his prime, "a fearless, dominating man." At the age of seventy-three he greets the writer and her husband, Padraic Colum, coming

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towards them "in the old swift, eager way, and when he spoke, it was in the well-remembered eager voice." From his interest in Stefan George Mrs. Colum infers that "the old idea of the writer as leader and prophet was still with him."

In her evocation of Dublin during the national and literary revival at the beginning of the century Mrs. Colum conveys in a truly wonderful manner the aspiration, the humour, the fantasy and the high excitement of that time. Her eye for qualities gives a refreshing novelty to her impressions of such figures as Synge, A.E., Pearse, Casement, Moore and very many others. Further on there is a full length portrait of James Joyce in his later Paris days. In Mary Colum's eyes "he was not only a genius but the one member of his family (in Paris) who had much practical sense." He was a reliable friend who "would help one with any old thing—to find an apartment or a maid or a doctor, how to plan a journey or pick out a hotel." Examples are given of his generosity and his "cussedness." His expressive singing leads Mary Colum to the belief that "there were whole regions of his mind that could only be expressed if he had become a musician rather than a writer." Mrs. Colum has reason to believe also that until the end of his days Joyce awaited some recognition from the Irish government. It may not, perhaps, be out of place to remark here that shortly after the German invasion Joyce was greatly facilitated in a domestic arrangement through the exertions of the Irish Minister in France.

Space does not allow us to touch more fully on the many other aspects of this important book. It is an exceptional volume in every sense, for it is printed and bound with rare distinction.

T.S.

THE editors of **IRISH WRITING** would welcome contributions from Irish writers all over the world and are especially interested in new writers of Irish birth or descent.

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BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

ERNEST GEBLER: Born Dublin, 1915, of Czech-Irish parents. Has published many stories and a first novel, "He Had My Heart Scalded," (Sampson Low), which is being widely translated. Is now living in London and working on another novel.

DOMHNALL O'CONAILL: Born Manchester, 1916, of Irish parents. Is at present stage manager for Longford Productions, Dublin. His work has been published in numerous Irish, British, and American magazines, and has been translated into Polish and Greek.

GERALDINE CUMMINS: Born Cork. Her published work includes many short stories, twelve books on Historical and Psychological Research, and two novels of Irish country life. Has had plays produced at the Abbey Theatre, and also at the Chanticleer Theatre, London.

NORAH HOULT: Born Dublin. Now lives in London but has also lived both in Ireland and America. Is a well-known short story writer and novelist.

JOHN V. KELLEHER: Born 1916, Lawrence, Massachusetts, of Irish (Cork-Kerry-Limerick-Sligo-Mayo) ancestry. Is Assistant Professor of modern Irish History and Literature at Harvard. Has contributed to the "Atlantic Monthly," "New Republic," and "The Bell." Says that he is 'directly descended from Ceileachar, King of Someplace or other in Munster, who lost the battle of Ballagh Mughan all by his little self in 908 A.D.'

C. DAY LEWIS: Born 1904, at Ballintubber, Co. Leix, of Anglo-Irish parents. Is related on his mother's side to Oliver Goldsmith and on his father's, through the Butlers, to W. B. Yeats. Educated at Sherborne School and at Oxford. Was a schoolmaster for eight years. Is now married, with two sons, and lives in Devonshire.

DONAGH MacDONAGH: Born 1912. Was a barrister, a broadcaster, and is now a District Court Judge. Has published two books of poems and one play, "Happy As Larry," which has been produced in Dublin and London and is scheduled for production in New York this autumn.

ROY McFADDEN: Born Belfast, 1921. Has published three books of poetry, his latest being "The Heart's Townland." Is co-editor of "Lagan." A lawyer by profession.

ROBERT GREACEN: Born Londonderry, 1920. Holds a Diploma of Social Science from Trinity College, Dublin. Has contributed poetry and criticism to many Irish and English periodicals and has edited various collections. Is married and lives in Dublin.

BLANAID SALKELD: Born in Chittagong, India (now Pakistan), of Irish parents. Has published three volumes of poetry to date. Her verse-play, "Scarecrow Over the Corn," was produced in Dublin.

PATRICK KAVANAGH: Is one of Ireland's leading poets, his latest volume, "A Soul for Sale," was published this year by Macmillan. Is on the staff of a Dublin weekly.

A. J. LEVENTHAL: Born 1896. Has been a schoolmaster and Fleet Street Journalist, and has acted with the Abbey Theatre. Lectures in French and English at Dublin University, and is dramatic critic to the "Dublin Magazine."

